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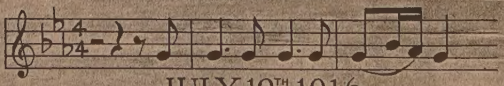

JULY 19TH 1916

Charles Webb Etheridge

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TORONTO

The Life of
Samuel Johnson, LL.D.

By James Boswell, Esq.

IN THREE VOLS.—VOL. I.

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
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1912

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

THIS edition of Boswell's *Life of Johnson* is reprinted from that prepared by Mr. Mowbray Morris for the Messrs. Macmillan's "Globe" series in 1893. As the plan of the present series excludes critical estimates, only the following paragraphs, dealing with the bibliography of the book, are reproduced from Mr. Morris's introduction. A. W. P.

BOSWELL'S *Life of Johnson* was published on May 16th, 1791, in two volumes quarto. A supplementary volume was added in 1794, followed almost immediately by a second edition in three volumes octavo, in which, however, the fresh materials, instead of being incorporated in the text, were clumsily placed at the beginning and end of the book. Boswell was engaged in arranging these materials for a third edition when he died on May 19th, 1795. The work was then taken up by Malone, who had watched and helped its progress from the first, and published in four volumes octavo in 1799. The author's plan, so far as he had lived to indicate it, was carefully followed. The fresh materials were distributed throughout

the text according to his directions; his new notes, and his corrections of the old ones, were all faithfully printed; all additions, in the shape of letters or notes, were marked with crotchets so as to distinguish the editor's responsibility from the author's; but for some reason the proof-sheets did not pass through Malone's hands. The fourth edition, which followed in 1804, was published under his own supervision, with some fresh additions of letters and notes distinguished as before from Boswell's own work. From this text the present edition has been printed.

It would be tedious to enumerate all the editions that have been published of this famous biography. Malone issued two more before his death in 1812. From that year onwards the book was more than once reprinted under various hands, but still practically remained much as Malone had left it till Croker's edition appeared in 1831. The new editor was, as everyone knows, severely chastised by both Macaulay and Carlyle, and much of the chastisement was undoubtedly deserved. His liberties with Boswell's text were indefensible on any grounds; he sometimes blundered in his notes, and he was sometimes foolish. The success of his work has, however, been often made use of as a triumphant refutation of Macaulay's charges; but in fact it has succeeded because he had the good sense to recognise their substantial justice. In a second edition most of his worst offences were removed, and still further improvements were made in a third. In its new shape Croker's work became a very different thing from the object of Macaulay's censure, and in that shape has ever been deservedly popular. * * * * * *

Of Croker's successors the most important are the Reverend Alexander Napier and Dr. Birkbeck Hill. Mr.

Napier's edition was published in 1884 in six volumes, of which four were occupied with the text, and two with the *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* and a mass of familiar, but always welcome extracts from the *Johnsoniana* of Mrs. Thrale, Madame D'Arblay, Hannah More, Miss Reynolds, Percy, Hawkins, Tyers, and other members of the great man's circle. Among these, however, was one document which is undoubtedly the most interesting contribution to the great Johnsonian legend that our times have seen. This is *The Diary of a Visit to England* by Dr. Thomas Campbell. Dr. Campbell was an Irish clergyman, of some note in his day as a writer on the history and the church of his country, who visited England at various times during the years 1775–92. He made what may be called the provincial's "grand tour" of London, visited the theatres, coffee-houses, and auction-rooms, heard all the popular preachers, and was introduced to the studios of Reynolds and Gainsborough; he met Johnson often at the Thrales's and elsewhere, besides visiting him at his own house, and though they seem to have been good friends enough, his portrait of the Doctor is certainly not flattering. In directness and vivacity he sometimes runs even Boswell close, and his diary often supplies an entertaining commentary on the biography. The existence of this curious work, which was published in 1854 at Sydney, was first made known in this country by an article in *The Edinburgh Review*, written in 1859 at the instance of, and partly from materials supplied by, Macaulay. The manuscript had been discovered in one of the offices of the Supreme Court at Sydney, behind an old press which had not been moved for years. Its authenticity has fortunately been proved beyond suspicion, and its strange hiding-place has been explained by the fact that one of its

author's nephews was Sheriff and Provost-Marshal of the capital of New South Wales. * * * * * * * *

In 1887 Dr. Birkbeck Hill's edition was published by the Clarendon Press in a style worthy of that famous institution. Four stately volumes contain the biography; the fifth is occupied with the *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides;* the sixth is almost entirely filled with an index that may truly be called prodigious; all are rich in appendixes, while Croker himself was not a busier commentator. Of the vast labour spent on this edition who now needs to be told? In reverence for Johnson's memory and in admiration for his genius Dr. Hill indeed yields not even to Boswell..... I cannot take leave of him without expressing the obligations I owe to him, and to the Delegates of the Clarendon Press, for their courtesy in permitting me the free use of these volumes, as well as to the liberality with which he has at all times offered me the results of his long devotion to the great figure of his hero.

Of the present edition there is little to say. Neither the plan nor the size of the series to which it belongs permits much indulgence in the alluring, though often dangerous, pastime of annotation, had I been disposed to exercise it. All Boswell's own notes have of course been preserved, and distinguished with the initial B..... For the rest I can claim to have done little more than feed upon my predecessors, who have indeed left little more to be done. My own contributions are few and unimportant; what has been selected from others will, I trust, be found to the purpose.

[M. M.]

[1893.]

[Copy of the Title of the Original Quarto Edition.]

THE

LIFE

OF

SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.

COMPREHENDING

AN ACCOUNT OF HIS STUDIES

AND NUMEROUS WORKS,

IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER;

A SERIES OF HIS EPISTOLARY CORRESPONDENCE

AND CONVERSATIONS WITH MANY EMINENT PERSONS;

AND

VARIOUS ORIGINAL PIECES OF HIS COMPOSITION

NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED:

THE WHOLE EXHIBITING A VIEW OF LITERATURE AND LITERARY MEN IN GREAT BRITAIN, FOR NEAR HALF A CENTURY, DURING WHICH HE FLOURISHED.

By JAMES BOSWELL, Esq.

——— *Quò fit ut* OMNIS
Votiva pateat veluti descripta tabella
VITA SENIS.—— HORAT.

3

IN TWO VOLUMES.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY HENRY BALDWIN,
FOR CHARLES DILLY, IN THE POULTRY

MDCCXCI.

DEDICATION

TO

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

My dear Sir,

Every liberal motive that can actuate an author in the dedication of his labours, concurs in directing me to you, as the person to whom the following Work should be inscribed.

If there be a pleasure in celebrating the distinguished merit of a contemporary, mixed with a certain degree of vanity, not altogether inexcusable, in appearing fully sensible of it, where can I find one, in complimenting whom I can with more general approbation gratify those feelings? Your excellence, not only in the Art over which you have long presided with unrivalled fame, but also in Philosophy and elegant Literature, is well known to the present, and will continue to be the admiration of future ages. Your equal and placid temper, your variety of conversation, your true politeness, by which you are so amiable in private society, and that enlarged hospitality which has long made your house a common centre of union for the great, the accomplished, the learned, and the ingenious—all these qualities I can, in perfect confidence of not being accused of flattery, ascribe to you.

If a man may indulge an honest pride, in having it known to the world that he has been thought worthy of particular attention by a person of the first eminence in the age in which he lived, whose company has been universally courted, I am justified in availing myself of the usual privilege of a Dedication, when I

mention that there has been a long and uninterrupted friendship between us.

If gratitude should be acknowledged for favours received, I have this opportunity, my dear Sir, most sincerely to thank you for the many happy hours which I owe to your kindness,—for the cordiality with which you have at all times been pleased to welcome me—for the number of valuable acquaintances to whom you have introduced me,—for the *noctes cænæque Deûm*, which I have enjoyed under your roof.

If a work should be inscribed to one who is master of the subject of it, and whose approbation, therefore, must insure it credit and success, the Life of Dr. Johnson is, with the greatest propriety, dedicated to Sir Joshua Reynolds, who was the intimate and beloved friend of that great man; the friend whom he declared to be "The most invulnerable man he knew; whom, if he should quarrel with him, he should find the most difficulty how to abuse." You, my dear Sir, studied him, and knew him well: you venerated and admired him. Yet, luminous as he was upon the whole, you perceived all the shades which mingled in the grand composition; all the little peculiarities and slight blemishes which marked the literary Colossus. Your very warm commendation of the specimen which I gave in my *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, of my being able to preserve his conversation in an authentic and lively manner, which opinion the Public has confirmed, was the best encouragement for me to persevere in my purpose of producing the whole of my stores.

In one respect, this Work will, in some passages, be different from the former. In my *Tour*, I was almost unboundedly open in my communications, and from my eagerness to display the wonderful fertility and readiness of Johnson's wit, freely shewed to the world its dexterity, even when I was myself the object of it. I trusted that I should be liberally understood, as knowing very well what I was about, and by no means as simply unconscious of the pointed effects of the satire. I own, indeed, that I was arrogant enough to suppose that the tenor of the rest of the book would sufficiently guard me against such a strange imputation. But it seems I judged too well of the world; for, though I could scarcely believe it, I have been undoubtedly informed, that many persons, especially in distant quarters, not penetrating

enough into Johnson's character, so as to understand his mode of treating his friends, have arraigned my judgment, instead of seeing that I was sensible of all that they could observe.

It is related of the great Dr. Clarke,[1] that when in one of his leisure hours he was unbending himself with a few friends in the most playful and frolicsome manner, he observed Beau Nash approaching; upon which he suddenly stopped;—"My boys," said he, "let us be grave: here comes a fool." The world, my friend, I have found to be a great fool, as to that particular on which it has become necessary to speak very plainly. I have, therefore, in this Work been more reserved; and though I tell nothing but the truth, I have still kept in my mind that the whole truth is not always to be exposed. This, however, I have managed so as to occasion no diminution of the pleasure which my book should afford; though malignity may sometimes be disappointed of its gratifications.

I am, my dear Sir,
Your much obliged friend,
And faithful humble servant,
JAMES BOSWELL.

London, *April* 20, 1791.

[1] Samuel Clarke (1675—1729), a celebrated divine, who during a busy and controversial life managed to offend almost all parties in turn. He was a chaplain to Queen Anne and rector of St. James's in Piccadilly. His most famous theological work was a *Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God.* He also published an edition of Cæsar, which was highly praised by Addison in *The Spectator*, and began one of Homer, which was completed by his son. Johnson coupled him for learning with Bentley, but used to warn Boswell against his unorthodoxy, though he afterwards changed his mind on this point.

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE FIRST EDITION

I at last deliver to the world a Work which I have long promised, and of which, I am afraid, too high expectations have been raised. The delay of its publication must be imputed, in a considerable degree, to the extraordinary zeal which has been shewn by distinguished persons in all quarters to supply me with additional information concerning its illustrious subject; resembling in this the grateful tribes of ancient nations, of which every individual was eager to throw a stone upon the grave of a departed Hero, and thus to share in the pious office of erecting an honourable monument to his memory.

The labour and anxious attention with which I have collected and arranged the materials of which these volumes are composed, will hardly be conceived by those who read them with careless facility. The stretch of mind and prompt assiduity by which so many conversations were preserved, I myself, at some distance of time, contemplate with wonder; and I must be allowed to suggest, that the nature of the Work in other respects, as it consists of innumerable detached particulars, all which, even the most minute, I have spared no pains to ascertain with a scrupulous authenticity, has occasioned a degree of trouble far beyond that of any other species of composition. Were I to detail the books which I have consulted, and the inquiries which I have found it necessary to make by various channels, I should probably be thought ridiculously ostentatious. Let me only observe, as a specimen of my trouble, that I have sometimes been obliged to run half over London, in order to fix a date correctly; which, when I had accomplished, I well knew would obtain me no praise, though a failure would have been to my discredit. And after all, perhaps, hard as it may be, I shall not be surprised if omissions or mistakes be pointed out with invidious severity. I have also been extremely careful as to the exactness of my quotations; holding that there is a respect due to the public, which should oblige every

author to attend to this, and never to presume to introduce them with— "I think I have read;"—*or* "If I remember right;" *when the originals may be examined.*

I beg leave to express my warmest thanks to those who have been pleased to favour me with communications and advice in the conduct of my Work. But I cannot sufficiently acknowledge my obligations to my friend Mr. MALONE, *who was so good as to allow me to read to him almost the whole of my manuscript, and make such remarks as were greatly for the advantage of the Work; though it is but fair to him to mention, that upon many occasions I differed from him, and followed my own judgment. I regret exceedingly that I was deprived of the benefit of his revision, when not more than one half of the book had passed through the press; but after having completed his very laborious and admirable edition of* SHAKESPEARE, *for which he generously would accept of no other reward but that fame which he has so deservedly obtained, he fulfilled his promise of a long-wished-for visit to his relations in Ireland; from whence his safe return* finibus Atticis *is desired by his friends here, with all the classical ardour of* Sic te Diva potens Cypri; *for there is no man in whom more elegant and worthy qualities are united; and whose society, therefore, is more valued by those who know him.*

It is painful to me to think, that while I was carrying on this Work, several of those to whom it would have been most interesting have died. Such melancholy disappointments we know to be incident to humanity; but we do not feel them the less. Let me particularly lament the Reverend THOMAS WARTON, *and the Reverend Dr.* ADAMS. *Mr.* WARTON, *amidst his variety of genius and learning, was an excellent biographer. His contributions to my Collection are highly estimable; and as he had a true relish of my* "Tour to the Hebrides," *I trust I should now have been gratified with a larger share of his kind approbation. Dr.* ADAMS, *eminent as the head of a College, as a writer, and as a most amiable man, had known* JOHNSON *from his early years, and was his friend through life. What reason I had to hope for the countenance of that venerable gentleman to this Work, will appear from what he wrote to me upon a former occasion from Oxford, November* 17, 1785:—"Dear Sir, I hazard this letter, not knowing where it will find you, to thank you for your very agreeable 'Tour,' which I found here on my return from the country, and in which you have depicted our friend so

perfectly to my fancy, in every attitude, every scene and situation, that I have thought myself in the company, and of the party almost throughout. It has given very general satisfaction; and those who have found most fault with a passage here and there, have agreed that they could not help going through, and being entertained with the whole. I wish, indeed, some few gross expressions had been softened, and a few of our Hero's foibles had been a little more shaded; but it is useful to see the weaknesses incident to great minds; and you have given us Dr. Johnson's authority that in history all ought to be told."

Such a sanction to my faculty of giving a just representation of Dr. JOHNSON *I could not conceal. Nor will I suppress my satisfaction in the consciousness, that by recording so considerable a portion of the wisdom and wit of* "the brightest ornament of the eighteenth century,"[1] *I have largely provided for the instruction and entertainment of mankind.*

LONDON, April 20, 1791.

[1] *See Mr. Malone's Preface to his edition of Shakespeare*

THE LIFE

OF

SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.

To write the Life of him who excelled all mankind in writing the lives of others, and who, whether we consider his extraordinary endowments, or his various works, has been equalled by few in any age, is an arduous, and may be reckoned in me a presumptuous task.

Had Dr. Johnson written his own Life, in conformity with the opinion which he has given,[1] that every man's life may be best written by himself; had he employed in the preservation of his own history, that clearness of narration and elegance of language in which he has embalmed so many eminent persons, the world would probably have had the most perfect example of biography that was ever exhibited. But although he at different times, in a desultory manner, committed to writing many particulars of the progress of his mind and fortunes, he never had persevering diligence enough to form them into a regular composition. Of these memorials a few have been preserved; but the greater part was consigned by him to the flames, a few days before his death.

As I had the honour and happiness of enjoying his friendship for upwards of twenty years; as I had the scheme of writing his life constantly in view; as he was well apprised of this circumstance, and from time to time

[1] *Idler*, No. 84. B.

obligingly satisfied my inquiries, by communicating to me the incidents of his early years; as I acquired a facility in recollecting, and was very assiduous in recording, his conversation, of which the extraordinary vigour and vivacity constituted one of the first features of his character; and as I have spared no pains in obtaining materials concerning him, from every quarter where I could discover that they were to be found, and have been favoured with the most liberal communications by his friends; I flatter myself that few biographers have entered upon such a work as this with more advantages; independent of literary abilities, in which I am not vain enough to compare myself with some great names who have gone before me in this kind of writing.

Since my work was announced several Lives and Memoirs of Dr. Johnson have been published, the most voluminous of which is one compiled for the booksellers of London, by Sir John Hawkins, Knight,[1] a man, whom, during my long intimacy with Dr. Johnson, I never saw in his company, I think, but once, and I am sure not above twice. Johnson might have esteemed him for his decent, religious demeanour, and his knowledge of books and literary history; but from the rigid formality of his manners, it is evident that they never could have lived together with companionable ease and familiarity: nor had Sir John Hawkins that nice perception which was neces-

[1] The greatest part of this book was written while Sir John Hawkins was alive; and I avow, that one object of my strictures was to make him feel some compunction for his illiberal treatment of Dr. Johnson. Since his decease, I have suppressed several of my remarks upon his work. But though I would not "war with the dead" *offensively*, I think it necessary to be strenuous in *defence* of my illustrious friend, which I cannot be, without strong animadversions upon a writer who has greatly injured him. Let me add, that though I doubt I should not have been very prompt to gratify Sir John Hawkins with any compliment in his lifetime, I do now frankly acknowledge, that, in my opinion, his volume, however inadequate and improper as a life of Dr. Johnson, and however discredited by unpardonable inaccuracies in other respects, contains a collection of curious anecdotes and observations, which few men but its author could have brought together. B.

sary to mark the finer and less obvious parts of Johnson's character. His being appointed one of his executors, gave him an opportunity of taking possession of such fragments of a diary and other papers as were left ; of which, before delivering them up to the residuary legatee, whose property they were, he endeavoured to extract the substance. In this he has not been very successful, as I have found upon a perusal of those papers, which have been since transferred to me. Sir John Hawkins's ponderous labours, I must acknowledge, exhibit a *farrago*, of which a considerable portion is not devoid of entertainment to the lovers of literary gossiping ; but besides its being swelled out with long unnecessary extracts from various works (even one of several leaves from Osborne's Harleian Catalogue, and those not compiled by Johnson, but by Oldys), a very small part of it relates to the person who is the subject of the book ; and, in that, there is such an inaccuracy in the statement of facts, as in so solemn an author is hardly excusable, and certainly makes his narrative very unsatisfactory. But what is still worse, there is throughout the whole of it a dark uncharitable cast, by which the most unfavourable construction is put upon almost every circumstance in the character and conduct of my illustrious friend ; who, I trust, will, by a true and fair delineation, be vindicated both from the injurious misrepresentations of this author, and from the slighter aspersions of a lady who once lived in great intimacy with him.[1]

There is, in the British Museum, a letter from Bishop Warburton to Dr. Birch, on the subject of biography ; which, though I am aware it may expose me to a charge of artfully raising the value of my own work, by contrasting it with that of which I have spoken, is so well conceived and expressed, that I cannot refrain from here inserting it :

"I shall endeavour," says Dr. Warburton, "to give you what satisfaction I can in anything you want to be satisfied in any

[1] Mrs. Thrale, afterwards Mrs. Piozzi.

subject of Milton, and am extremely glad you intend to write his life. Almost all the life-writers we have had before Toland and Desmaiseaux are indeed strange insipid creatures; and yet I had rather read the worst of them, than be obliged to go through with this of Milton's, or the other's life of Boileau, where there is such a dull, heavy succession of long quotations of disinteresting passages, that it makes their method quite nauseous. But the verbose, tasteless Frenchman seems to lay it down as a principle, that every life must be a book, and what's worse, it proves a book without a life; for what do we know of Boileau, after all his tedious stuff? You are the only one (and I speak it without a compliment), that by the vigour of your style and sentiments, and the real importance of your materials, have the art (which one would imagine no one could have missed), of adding agreements to the most agreeable subject in the world, which is literary history.[1]

"*Nov.* 24, 1737."

Instead of melting down my materials into one mass, and constantly speaking in my own person, by which I might have appeared to have more merit in the execution of the work, I have resolved to adopt and enlarge upon the excellent plan of Mr. Mason, in his Memoirs of Gray. Wherever narrative is necessary to explain, connect, and supply, I furnish it to the best of my abilities; but in the chronological series of Johnson's life, which I trace as distinctly as I can, year by year, I produce, wherever it is in my power, his own minutes, letters, or conversation, being convinced that this mode is more lively, and will make my readers better acquainted with him, than even most of those were who actually knew him, but could know him only partially; whereas there is here an accumulation of intelligence from various points, by which his character is more fully understood and illustrated.

Indeed I cannot conceive a more perfect mode of writing any man's life, than not only relating all the most important events of it, in their order, but interweaving what he privately wrote, and said, and thought; by which mankind are enabled as it were to see him live, and to

[1] Brit. Mus. 4320, Ayscough's Catal. Sloane MSS. B.

"live o'er each scene" with him, as he actually advanced through the several stages of his life. Had his other friends been as diligent and ardent as I was, he might have been almost entirely preserved. As it is, I will venture to say, that he will be seen in this work more completely than any man who has ever yet lived.

And he will be seen as he really was; for I profess to write, not his panegyric, which must be all praise, but his Life; which great and good as he was, must not be supposed to be entirely perfect. To be as he was, is indeed subject of panegyric enough to any man in this state of being; but in every picture there should be shade as well as light, and when I delineate him without reserve, I do what he himself recommended, both by his precept and his example.

"If the biographer writes from personal knowledge, and makes haste to gratify the public curiosity, there is danger lest his interest, his fear, his gratitude, or his tenderness, overpower his fidelity, and tempt him to conceal, if not to invent. There are many who think it an act of piety to hide the faults or failings of their friends, even when they can no longer suffer by their detection; we therefore see whole ranks of characters adorned with uniform panegyric, and not to be known from one another but by extrinsic and casual circumstances. 'Let me remember,' says Hale, 'when I find myself inclined to pity a criminal, that there is likewise a pity due to the country.' If we owe regard to the memory of the dead, there is yet more respect to be paid to knowledge, to virtue, and to truth."[1]

What I consider as the peculiar value of the following work, is the quantity it contains of Johnson's conversation, which is universally acknowledged to have been eminently instructive and entertaining; and of which the specimens that I have given upon a former occasion,[2] have been received with so much approbation, that I have good grounds for supposing that the world will not be indifferent to more ample communications of a similar nature.

That the conversation of a celebrated man, if his talents

[1] *Rambler*, No. 60. B.

[2] In the *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*.

had been exerted in conversation, will best display his character, is, I trust, too well established in the judgment of mankind to be at all shaken by a sneering observation of Mr. Mason, in his Memoirs of Mr. William Whitehead, in which there is literally no *Life*, but a mere dry narrative of facts. I do not think it was quite necessary to attempt a depreciation of what is universally esteemed, because it was not to be found in the immediate object of the ingenious writer's pen; for in truth, from a man so still and so tame, as to be contented to pass many years as the domestic companion of a superannuated lord and lady,[1] conversation could no more be expected than from a Chinese mandarin on a chimney-piece, or the fantastic figures on a gilt leather screen.

If authority be required, let us appeal to Plutarch, the prince of ancient biographers. Οὔτε ταῖς ἐπιφανεστάταις πράξεσι πάντως ἔνεστι δήλωσις ἀρετῆς ἢ κακίας, ἀλλὰ πρᾶγμα βραχὺ πολλάκις, καὶ ῥῆμα, καὶ παιδιά τις, ἔμφασιν ἤθους ἐποίησεν μᾶλλον, ἢ μάχαι μυριόνεκροι, παρατάξεις αἱ μέγισται, καὶ πολιορκία πόλεων. "Nor is it always in the most distinguished achievements that men's virtues or vices may be best discerned; but very often an action of small note, a short saying, or a jest, shall distinguish a person's real character more than the greatest sieges, or the most important battles."[2]

To this may be added the sentiments of the very man whose life I am about to exhibit.

"The business of the biographer is often to pass slightly over those performances and incidents which produce vulgar greatness, to lead the thoughts into domestic privacies, and display the minute details of daily life, where exterior appendages are cast aside, and men excel each other only by prudence and by virtue. The account of Thuanus is with great propriety said by its author to have been written, that it might lay open to posterity the private and familiar character of that man, *cujus ingenium et candorem ex ipsius scriptis sunt olim semper miraturi*, whose candour and genius will to the end of time be by his writings preserved in admiration.

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[1] The (third) Earl and Countess of Jersey.

[2] Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*, init.—Langhorne's translation. B.

"There are many invisible circumstances, which, whether we read as inquirers after natural or moral knowledge, whether we intend to enlarge our science or increase our virtue, are more important than public occurrences. Thus Sallust, the great master of nature, has not forgot in his account of Catiline to remark, that his walk was now quick, and again slow, as an indication of a mind revolving something with violent commotion. Thus the story of Melanchthon affords a striking lecture on the value of time, by informing us, that when he had made an appointment, he expected not only the hour but the minute to be fixed, that the day might not run out in the idleness of suspense; and all the plans and enterprises of De Witt are now of less importance to the world than that part of his personal character, which represents him as careful of his health, and negligent of his life.

"But biography has often been allotted to writers, who seem very little acquainted with the nature of their task, or very negligent about the performance. They rarely afford any other account than might be collected from public papers, but imagine themselves writing a life, when they exhibit a chronological series of actions or preferments; and so little regard the manners or behaviour of their heroes, that more knowledge may be gained of a man's real character, by a short conversation with one of his servants, than from a formal and studied narrative, begun with his pedigree, and ended with his funeral.——

"There are, indeed, some natural reasons why these narratives are often written by such as were not likely to give much instruction or delight, and why most accounts of particular persons are barren and useless. If a life be delayed till interest and envy are at an end, we may hope for impartiality, but must expect little intelligence; for the incidents which give excellence to biography are of a volatile and evanescent kind, such as soon escape the memory, and are rarely transmitted by tradition. We know how few can pourtray a living acquaintance, except by his most prominent and observable particularities, and the grosser features of his mind; and it may be easily imagined how much of this little knowledge may be lost in imparting it, and how soon a succession of copies will lose all resemblance of the original."[1]

I am fully aware of the objections which may be made to the minuteness on some occasions of my detail of Johnson's conversation, and how happily it is adapted for the petty exercise of ridicule, by men of superficial

[1] *Rambler*, No. 60. B.

understanding, and ludicrous fancy: but I remain firm and confident in my opinion, that minute particulars are frequently characteristic and always amusing, when they relate to a distinguished man. I am therefore exceedingly unwilling that any thing, however slight, which my illustrious friend thought it worth his while to express, with any degree of point, should perish. For this almost superstitious reverence, I have found very old and venerable authority, quoted by our great modern prelate, Secker, in whose tenth sermon there is the following passage:

"*Rabbi David Kimchi*, a noted Jewish commentator, who lived about five hundred years ago, explains that passage in the first Psalm, *His leaf also shall not wither*, from Rabbins yet older than himself, thus: That *even the idle talk*, so he expresses it, *of a good man ought to be regarded*; the most superfluous things he saith are always of some value. And other ancient authors have the same phrase, nearly in the same sense."

Of one thing I am certain, that considering how highly the small portion which we have of the table talk and other anecdotes of our celebrated writers is valued, and how earnestly it is regretted that we have not more, I am justified in preserving rather too many of Johnson's sayings, than too few; especially as from the diversity of dispositions it cannot be known with certainty beforehand, whether what may seem trifling to some, and perhaps to the collector himself, may not be most agreeable to many; and the greater number that an author can please in any degree, the more pleasure does there arise to a benevolent mind.

To those who are weak enough to think this a degrading task, and the time and labour which have been devoted to it misemployed, I shall content myself with opposing the authority of the greatest man of any age, JULIUS CÆSAR, of whom Bacon observes, that "in his book of Apophthegms which he collected, we see that he esteemed it more honour to make himself but a pair of tables, to take the wise and pithy words of others, than to

have every word of his own to be made an apophthegm or an oracle."[1]

Having said thus much by way of introduction, I commit the following pages to the candour of the public.

Samuel Johnson was born at Lichfield, in Staffordshire, on the 18th of September, N. S. 1709; and his initiation into the Christian church was not delayed; for his baptism is recorded, in the register of St. Mary's parish in that city, to have been performed on the day of his birth: his father is there styled *Gentleman*, a circumstance of which an ignorant panegyrist has praised him for not being proud; when the truth is, that the appellation of Gentleman, though now lost in the indiscriminate assumption of *Esquire*, was commonly taken by those who could not boast of gentility. His father was Michael Johnson, a native of Derbyshire, of obscure extraction, who settled in Lichfield as a bookseller and stationer. His mother was Sarah Ford, descended from an ancient race of substantial yeomanry in Warwickshire. They were well advanced in years when they married, and never had more than two children, both sons; Samuel, their firstborn, who lived to be the illustrious character whose various excellence I am to endeavour to record, and Nathaniel, who died in his twenty-fifth year.

Mr. Michael Johnson was a man of a large and robust body, and of a strong and active mind; yet, as in the most solid rocks veins of unsound substance are often discovered, there was in him a mixture of that disease, the nature of which eludes the most minute inquiry, though the effects are well known to be a weariness of life, an unconcern about those things which agitate the greater part of mankind, and a general sensation of gloomy wretchedness. From him then his son inherited, with some other qualities, "a vile melancholy," which in

[1] Bacon's *Advancement of Learning*, Book I. B.

his too strong expression of any disturbance of the mind, "made him mad all his life, at least not sober."[1] Michael was, however, forced by the narrowness of his circumstances to be very diligent in business, not only in his shop, but by occasionally resorting to several towns in the neighbourhood,[2] some of which were at a considerable distance from Lichfield. At that time booksellers' shops, in the provincial towns of England, were very rare; so that there was not one even in Birmingham, in which town old Mr. Johnson used to open a shop every market-day. He was a pretty good Latin scholar, and a citizen so creditable as to be made one of the magistrates of Lichfield[3]; and being a man of good sense, and skill in his trade, he acquired a reasonable share of wealth, of which, however, he afterwards lost the greatest part, by

[1] *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, 3rd edit. p. 213. B.

[2] Extract of a letter, dated "Trentham, St. Peter's day, 1716," written by the Rev. George Plaxton, Chaplain at that time to Lord Gower, which may serve to show the high estimation in which the father of our great moralist was held:—"Johnson, the Lichfield librarian, is now here; he propagates learning all over this diocese, and advanceth knowledge to its just height; all the clergy here are his pupils, and suck all they have from him; Allen cannot make a warrant without his precedent, nor our quondam John Evans draw a recognizance *sine directione Michaelis*."—*Gentleman's Magazine*, October, 1791. B.

[3] "My father being that year Sheriff of Lichfield, and to ride the circuit of the County next day, which was a ceremony then performed with great pomp; he was asked by my mother, 'Whom he would invite to the Riding?' and answered, 'All the town now.' He feasted the citizens with uncommon magnificence, and was the last but one that maintained the splendour of the Riding." *An Account of the Life of Dr. Samuel Johnson, from his Birth to his Eleventh Year, written by Himself.* This very rare volume was published in 1805 by Richard Wright, Surgeon of Lichfield, from a volume of MSS. preserved by Francis Barber, Johnson's black servant, when the Doctor a few days before his death had ordered all his papers to be burnt. The volume also contained the correspondence between Johnson and Miss Boothby mentioned *post*. The Autobiography was printed by Croker in an Appendix: the correspondence by Napier in the supplementary volume to his edition entitled *Johnsoniana*.

engaging unsuccessfully in a manufacture of parchment. He was a zealous high-churchman and royalist, and retained his attachment to the unfortunate House of Stuart, though he reconciled himself, by casuistical arguments of expediency and necessity, to take the oaths imposed by the prevailing power.

There is a circumstance in his life somewhat romantic, but so well authenticated, that I shall not omit it. A young woman of Leek, in Staffordshire, while he served his apprenticeship there, conceived a violent passion for him; and though it met with no favourable return followed him to Lichfield, where she took lodgings opposite to the house in which he lived, and indulged her hopeless flame. When he was informed that it so preyed upon her mind that her life was in danger, he with a generous humanity went to her and offered to marry her, but it was then too late: her vital power was exhausted; and she actually exhibited one of the very rare instances of dying for love. She was buried in the cathedral of Lichfield; and he, with a tender regard, placed a stone over her grave with this inscription:

Here lies the body of
Mrs. ELIZABETH BLANEY, a stranger:
She departed this life
20th of September, 1694.

Johnson's mother was a woman of distinguished understanding.[1] I asked his old schoolfellow, Mr. Hector, surgeon, of Birmingham, if she was not vain of her son. He said, "she had too much good sense to be vain, but she knew her son's value." Her piety was not inferior to her understanding; and to her must be ascribed those early impressions of religion upon the mind of her son, from which the world afterward derived so much benefit. He told me, that he remembered distinctly having had the first notice of Heaven, "a place to which

[1] According to Johnson however (in the aforesaid Autobiography) she had little education, and was but an indifferent companion to her husband in consequence.

good people went," and Hell, "a place to which bad people went," communicated to him by her, when a little child in bed with her; and that it might be the better fixed in his memory, she sent him to repeat it to Thomas Jackson, their man-servant; he not being in the way, this was not done; but there was no occasion for any artificial aid for its preservation.

In following so very eminent a man from his cradle to his grave, every minute particular, which can throw light on the progress of his mind, is interesting. That he was remarkable, even in his earliest years, may easily be supposed; for to use his own words in his Life of Sydenham, "That the strength of his understanding, the accuracy of his discernment, and the ardour of his curiosity, might have been remarked from his infancy, by a diligent observer, there is no reason to doubt. For there is no instance of any man, whose history has been minutely related, that did not in every part of life discover the same proportion of intellectual vigour."

In all such investigations it is certainly unwise to pay too much attention to incidents which the credulous relate with eager satisfaction, and the more scrupulous or witty inquirer considers only as topics of ridicule: yet there is a traditional story of the infant Hercules of Toryism, so curiously characteristic, that I shall not withhold it. It was communicated to me in a letter from Miss Mary Adye, of Lichfield.

"When Dr. Sacheverel was at Lichfield, Johnson was not quite three years old. My grandfather Hammond observed him at the cathedral perched upon his father's shoulders, listening and gaping at the much celebrated preacher. Mr. Hammond asked Mr. Johnson how he could possibly think of bringing such an infant to church, and in the midst of so great a crowd. He answered, because it was impossible to keep him at home; for, young as he was, he believed he had caught the public spirit and zeal for Sacheverel, and would have stayed for ever in the church, satisfied with beholding him."

Nor can I omit a little instance of that jealous independence of spirit, and impetuosity of temper, which

never forsook him. The fact was acknowledged to me by himself, upon the authority of his mother. One day when the servant who used to be sent to school to conduct him home, had not come in time, he set out by himself, though he was then so near-sighted, that he was obliged to stoop down on his hands and knees to take a view of the kennel, before he ventured to step over it. His schoolmistress, afraid that he might miss his way, or fall into the kennel, or be run over by a cart, followed him at some distance. He happened to turn about and perceive her. Feeling her careful attention as an insult to his manliness, he ran back to her in a rage, and beat her, as well as his strength would permit.

Of the power of his memory, for which he was all his life eminent to a degree almost incredible, the following early instance was told me in his presence at Lichfield, in 1776, by his step-daughter, Mrs. Lucy Porter, as related to her by his mother. When he was a child in petticoats, and had learnt to read, Mrs. Johnson one morning put the Common Prayer Book into his hands, pointed to the collect for the day, and said, "Sam, you must get this by heart." She went up stairs leaving him to study it: but by the time she had reached the second floor, she heard him following her. "What's the matter?" said she. "I can say it," he replied; and repeated it distinctly, though he could not have read it more than twice.

But there has been another story of his infant precocity generally circulated, and generally believed, the truth of which I am to refute upon his own authority. It is told,[1] that, when a child of three years old, he chanced to tread upon a duckling, the eleventh of a brood, and killed it; upon which, it is said, he dictated to his mother the following epitaph:

"Here lies good master duck,
Whom Samuel Johnson trod on;
If it had liv'd, it had been *good luck*,
For then we'd had an *odd one*."

[1] *Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson*, by Hester Lynch Piozzi, p. 11. *Life of Dr. Johnson*, by Sir John Hawkins, p. 6. B.

There is surely internal evidence that this little composition combines in it, what no child of three years old could produce, without an extension of its faculties by immediate inspiration; yet Mrs. Lucy Porter, Dr. Johnson's step-daughter, positively maintained to me, in his presence, that there could be no doubt of the truth of this anecdote, for she had heard it from his mother. So difficult is it to obtain an authentic relation of facts, and such authority may there be for error; for he assured me, that his father made the verses, and wished to pass them for his child's. He added, "my father was a foolish old man; that is to say foolish in talking of his children."[1]

Young Johnson had the misfortune to be much afflicted with the scrofula, or king's evil, which disfigured a countenance naturally well formed, and hurt his visual nerves so much, that he did not see at all with one of his eyes, though its appearance was little different from

[1] This anecdote of the duck, though disproved by internal and external evidence, has nevertheless, upon supposition of its truth, been made the foundation of the following ingenious and fanciful reflections of Miss Seward, amongst the communications concerning Dr. Johnson with which she has been pleased to favour me:—

"These infant numbers contain the seeds of those propensities which through his life so strongly marked his character, of that poetic talent which afterwards bore such rich and plentiful fruits; for excepting his orthographic works, everything which Dr. Johnson wrote was poetry, whose essence consists, not in numbers, or in jingle, but in the strength and glow of a fancy, to which all the stores of nature and of art stand in prompt administration; and in an eloquence which conveys their blended illustrations in a language 'more tuneable than needs or rhyme or verse to add more harmony.' The above little verses also shew that superstitious bias which 'grew with his growth, and strengthened with his strength,' and of late years particularly injured his happiness by presenting to him the gloomy side of religion, rather than that bright and cheering one which gilds the period of closing life with the light of pious hope."

This is so beautifully imagined, that I would not suppress it. But, like many other theories, it is deduced from a supposed fact, which is, indeed, a fiction. B.

that of the other. There is amongst his prayers one inscribed "*When my* EYE *was restored to its use*,"[1] which ascertains a defect that many of his friends knew he had, though I never perceived it.[2] I supposed him to be only near-sighted; and indeed I must observe, that in no other respect could I discern any defect in his vision; on the contrary, the force of his attention and perceptive quickness made him see and distinguish all manner of objects, whether of nature or of art, with a nicety that is rarely to be found. When he and I were travelling in the Highlands of Scotland, and I pointed out to him a mountain which I observed resembled a cone, he corrected my inaccuracy, by shewing me, that it was indeed pointed at the top, but that one side of it was larger than the other. And the ladies with whom he was acquainted, agree, that no man was more nicely and minutely critical in the elegance of female dress. When I found that he saw the romantic beauties of Islam, in Derbyshire, much better than I did, I told him that he resembled an able performer upon a bad instrument. How false and contemptible then are all the remarks which have been made to the prejudice either of his candour or of his philosophy, founded upon a supposition that he was almost blind! It has been said, that he contracted this grievous malady from his nurse. His mother yielding to the superstitious notion, which, it is wonderful to think, prevailed so long in this country, as to the virtue of the regal touch; a notion which our kings encouraged, and to which a man of such inquiry and such judgment as Carte could give credit; carried him to London, where he was actually touched by Queen Anne.[3] Mrs. Johnson indeed, as Mr.

[1] *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 27. B.

[2] Speaking himself of the imperfection of one of his eyes, he said to Dr. Burney, "the dog was never good for much."

[3] He was only thirty months old, when he was taken to London to be touched for the evil. "We went in the stage-coach," he has recorded, "and returned in the waggon, as my mother said, because my cough was violent. . . . We were troublesome to the passengers. . . . I was sick; one woman

Hector informed me, acted by the advice of the celebrated Sir John Floyer, then a physician in Lichfield. Johnson used to talk of this very frankly; and Mrs. Piozzi has preserved his very picturesque description of the scene, as it remained upon his fancy. Being asked if he could remember Queen Anne,—"He had," he said, "a confused, but somehow a sort of solemn recollection of a lady in diamonds, and a long black hood."[1] This touch, however, was without any effect. I ventured to say to him, in allusion to the political principles in which he was educated, and of which he ever retained some odour, that "his mother had not carried him far enough, she should have taken him to Rome."

He was first taught to read English by Dame Oliver, a widow, who kept a school for young children in Lichfield. He told me she could read the black letter, and asked him to borrow for her, from his father, a Bible in that character. When he was going to Oxford, she came to take leave of him, brought him, in the simplicity of her kindness, a present of gingerbread, and said he was the best scholar she ever had. He delighted in mentioning this early compliment: adding, with a smile, that "this was as high a proof of his merit as he could conceive." His next instructor in English was a master, whom, when he spoke of him to me, he familiarly called Tom Brown, who, said he, "published a spelling-book, and dedicated it to the UNIVERSE; but I fear no copy of it can now be had."

He began to learn Latin with Mr. Hawkins, usher,

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fondled me, the other was disgusted." During this visit, his mother purchased for him a small silver cup and spoon. "The cup," he affectingly adds, "was one of the last pieces of plate which dear Tetty [his pet name for his wife Elizabeth] sold in our distress. I have now the spoon. She bought at the same time two tea-spoons, and till my manhood, she had no more." (Autobiography.) It appears from the newspapers of the time that two hundred persons were touched by Queen Anne in one day, March 30, 1712.

[1] *Anecdotes*, p. 10. B.

or under-master of Lichfield school, "a man," said he, "very skilful in his little way." With him he continued two years, and then rose to be under the care of Mr. Hunter, the head-master, who, according to his account, "was very severe, and wrong-headedly severe. He used," said he, "to beat us unmercifully; and he did not distinguish between ignorance and negligence; for he would beat a boy equally for not knowing a thing, as for neglecting to know it. He would ask a boy a question, and if he did not answer it, he would beat him, without considering whether he had an opportunity of knowing how to answer it. For instance, he would call up a boy and ask him Latin for a candlestick, which the boy could not expect to be asked. Now, Sir, if a boy could answer every question, there would be no need of a master to teach him."[1]

It is, however, but justice to the memory of Mr. Hunter to mention, that though he might err in being too severe, the school of Lichfield was very respectable in his time. The late Dr. Taylor, Prebendary of Westminster, who was educated under him, told me, that "he was an excellent master, and that his ushers were most of them men of eminence; that Holbrook, one of the most ingenious men, best scholars, and best preachers of his age, was usher during the greatest part of the time that Johnson was at school. Then came Hague, of whom as much might be said, with the addition that he was an elegant poet. Hague was succeeded by Green, afterwards Bishop of Lincoln, whose character in the learned world is well known. In the same form with Johnson was Congreve, who afterwards became chaplain to Archbishop Boulter, and by that connexion obtained good preferment in Ireland. He was a younger son of the ancient family of Congreve, in Staffordshire, of which the poet was a branch. His

[1] Hunter was a Prebendary of Lichfield and grandfather of Miss Seward. There was a tradition in Johnson's time that Addison had been at this school, and had been ringleader in a *barring-out* (see *Lives of the Poets*, "Addison"). Garrick entered the school two years after Johnson left it.

brother sold the estate. There was also Lowe, afterwards Canon of Windsor."

Indeed Johnson was very sensible how much he owed to Mr. Hunter. Mr. Langton one day asked him how he had acquired so accurate a knowledge of Latin, in which, I believe, he was exceeded by no man of his time; he said, "My master whipped me very well. Without that, Sir, I should have done nothing." He told Mr. Langton, that while Hunter was flogging his boys unmercifully, he used to say, "And this I do to save you from the gallows." Johnson, upon all occasions, expressed his approbation of enforcing instruction by means of the rod. "I would rather," said he, "have the rod to be the general terror to all, to make them learn, than tell a child, if you do thus, or thus, you will be more esteemed than your brothers or sisters. The rod produces an effect which terminates in itself. A child is afraid of being whipped, and gets his task, and there's an end on't; whereas, by exciting emulation and comparisons of superiority, you lay the foundation of lasting mischief; you make brothers and sisters hate each other."

When Johnson saw some young ladies in Lincolnshire who were remarkably well behaved, owing to their mother's strict discipline and severe correction, he exclaimed, in one of Shakespeare's lines a little varied,[1]

"*Rod*, I will honour thee for this thy duty."

That superiority over his fellows, which he maintained with so much dignity in his march through life, was not assumed from vanity and ostentation, but was the natural and constant effect of those extraordinary powers of mind, of which he could not but be conscious by comparison; the intellectual difference, which in other cases of comparison of characters, is often a matter of undecided contest, being as clear in his case as the superiority of stature in some men above others. Johnson did not strut or stand on tiptoe, he only did not stoop. From his earliest

[1] "Sword, I will hallow thee for this thy deed."—*Second Part of King Henry VI.*, iv. 10.

years, his superiority was perceived and acknowledged. He was from the beginning ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν, a king of men. His schoolfellow, Mr. Hector, has obligingly furnished me with many particulars of his boyish days; and assured me that he never knew him corrected at school, but for talking and diverting other boys from their business. He seemed to learn by intuition; for though indolence and procrastination were inherent in his constitution, whenever he made an exertion he did more than any one else. In short, he is a memorable instance of what has been often observed, that the boy is the man in miniature; and that the distinguishing characteristics of each individual are the same, through the whole course of life. His favourites used to receive very liberal assistance from him; and such was the submission and deference with which he was treated, such the desire to obtain his regard, that three of the boys, of whom Mr. Hector was sometimes one, used to come in the morning as his humble attendants, and carry him to school. One in the middle stooped, while he sat upon his back, and one on each side supported him; and thus he was borne triumphant. Such a proof of the early predominance of intellectual vigour is very remarkable, and does honour to human nature.—Talking to me once himself of his being much distinguished at school, he told me, "They never thought to raise me by comparing me to any one; they never said Johnson is as good a scholar as such a one; but such a one is as good a scholar as Johnson; and this was said but of one, but of Lowe; and I do not think he was as good a scholar."

He discovered a great ambition to excel, which roused him to counteract his indolence. He was uncommonly inquisitive; and his memory was so tenacious, that he never forgot any thing that he either heard or read. Mr. Hector remembers having recited to him eighteen verses, which, after a little pause, he repeated verbatim, varying only one epithet, by which he improved the line.

He never joined with the other boys in their ordinary

diversions: his only amusement was in winter, when he took a pleasure in being drawn upon the ice by a boy bare-footed, who pulled him along by a garter fixed round him: no very easy operation, as his size was remarkably large. His defective sight, indeed, prevented him from enjoying the common sports; and he once pleasantly remarked to me, "how wonderfully well he had contrived to be idle without them." Lord Chesterfield, however, has justly observed in one of his letters, when earnestly cautioning a friend against the pernicious effects of idleness, that active sports are not to be reckoned idleness in young people; and that the listless torpor of doing nothing, alone deserves that name. Of this dismal inertness of disposition, Johnson had all his life too great a share. Mr. Hector relates, that "he could not oblige him more than by sauntering away the hours of vacation in the fields, during which he was more engaged in talking to himself than to his companion."

Dr. Percy, the Bishop of Dromore,[1] who was long intimately acquainted with him, and has preserved a few anecdotes concerning him, regretting that he was not a more diligent collector, informs me, that "when a boy he was immoderately fond of reading romances of chivalry, and he retained his fondness for them through life; so that," adds his lordship, "spending part of a summer at my parsonage-house in the country, he chose for his regular reading the old Spanish romance of FELIXMARTE OF HIRCANIA, in folio, which he read quite through. Yet I have heard him attribute to these extravagant fictions that unsettled turn of mind which prevented his ever fixing in any profession."

After having resided for some time at the house of his uncle, Cornelius Ford, Johnson was, at the age of fifteen, removed to the school of Stourbridge, in Worcestershire, of which Mr. Wentworth was then master. This step was taken by the advice of his cousin, the Rev. Mr. Ford, a man in whom both talents and good dispositions were

[1] Editor of *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765).

disgraced by licentiousness,[1] but who was a very able judge of what was right. At this school he did not receive so much benefit as was expected. It has been said, that he acted in the capacity of an assistant to Mr. Wentworth, in teaching the younger boys. "Mr. Wentworth," he told me, "was a very able man, but an idle man, and to me very severe; but I cannot blame him much. I was then a big boy; he saw I did not reverence him; and that he should get no honour by me. I had brought enough with me to carry me through; and all I should get at his school would be ascribed to my own labour, or to my former master. Yet he taught me a great deal."

He thus discriminated to Dr. Percy, Bishop of Dromore, his progress at his two grammar-schools. "At one, I learned much in the school, but little from the master; in the other, I learned much from the master, but little in the school."

The bishop also informs me, that "Dr. Johnson's father, before he was received at Stourbridge, applied to have him admitted as a scholar and assistant to the Rev. Samuel Lea, M.A. head master of Newport school, in Shropshire" (a very diligent good teacher, at that time in high reputation, under whom Mr. Hollis is said, in the Memoirs of his Life, to have been also educated).[2] This application to Mr. Lea was not successful; but Johnson had afterwards the gratification to hear that the old gentleman, who lived to a very advanced age, mentioned it as one of the most memorable events of his life, that "he was *very near* having that great man for his scholar."

He remained at Stourbridge little more than a year, and then he returned home, where he may be said to have loitered, for two years, in a state very unworthy his uncommon abilities. He had already given several proofs

[1] He is said to be the original of the parson in Hogarth's *Modern Midnight Conversation*. See also *Lives of the Poets*, ("Fenton.")

[2] As was likewise the Bishop of Dromore many years afterward. B.

of his poetical genius, both in his school exercises and in other occasional compositions. Of these I have obtained a considerable collection, by the favour of Mr. Wentworth, son of one of his masters, and of Mr. Hector, his school-fellow and friend; from which I select the following specimens:

Translation of VIRGIL. Pastoral I.

MELIBŒUS.

Now, Tityrus, you, supine and careless laid,
Play on your pipe beneath this beechen shade;
While wretched we about the world must roam,
And leave our pleasing fields and native home,
Here at your ease you sing your amorous flame,
And the wood rings with Amarillis' name.

TITYRUS.

Those blessings, friend, a deity bestow'd,
For I shall never think him less than god:
Oft on his altar shall my firstlings lie,
Their blood the consecrated stones shall dye:
He gave my flocks to graze the flowery meads,
And me to tune at ease th' unequal reeds.

MELIBŒUS.

My admiration only I exprest,
(No spark of envy harbours in my breast)
That, when confusion o'er the country reigns,
To you alone this happy state remains.
Here I, though faint myself, must drive my goats
Far from their ancient fields and humble cots.
This scarce I lead, who left on yonder rock
Two tender kids, the hopes of all the flock.
Had we not been perverse and careless grown,
This dire event by omens was foreshewn;
Our trees were blasted by the thunder stroke,
And left-hand crows, from an old hollow oak,
Foretold the coming evil by their dismal croak.

Translation of HORACE. Book I. Ode xxii.

THE man, my friend, whose conscious heart
With virtue's sacred ardour glows,
Nor taints with death the envenom'd dart,
Nor needs the guard of Moorish bows:

Though Scythia's icy cliffs he treads,
Or horrid Afric's faithless sands;
Or where the famed Hydaspes spreads
His liquid wealth o'er barbarous lands.

For while by Chloe's image charm'd,
Too far in Sabine woods I stray'd;
Me singing, careless and unarm'd,
A grisly wolf surprised, and fled.

No savage more portentous stain'd
Apulia's spacious wilds with gore;
No fiercer Juba's thirsty land,
Dire nurse of raging lions, bore.

Place me where no soft summer gale
Among the quivering branches sighs;
Where clouds condensed for ever veil
With horrid gloom the frowning skies:

Place me beneath the burning line,
A clime denied to human race;
I'll sing of Chloe's charms divine,
Her heavenly voice, and beauteous face.

Translation of HORACE. Book II. Ode ix.

CLOUDS do not always veil the skies,
Nor showers immerse the verdant plain;
Nor do the billows always rise,
Or storms afflict the ruffled main:

Nor, Valgius, on th' Armenian shores
Do the chain'd waters always freeze;
Not always furious Boreas roars,
Or bends with violent force the trees.

But you are ever drown'd in tears,
For Mystes dead you ever mourn;
No setting Sol can ease your cares,
But finds you sad at his return.

The wise experienc'd Grecian sage
Mourn'd not Antilochus so long;
Nor did King Priam's hoary age
So much lament his slaughter'd son.

Leave off, at length, these woman's sighs;
Augustus' numerous trophies sing;
Repeat that prince's victories,
To whom all nations tribute bring.

Niphates rolls an humbler wave;
At length the undaunted Scythian yields,
Content to live the Romans' slave,
And scarce forsakes his native fields.

Translation of part of the Dialogue between HECTOR *and* ANDROMACHE; *from the Sixth Book of* HOMER'S ILIAD.

SHE ceased; then god-like Hector answer'd kind,
(His various plumage sporting in the wind)
That post, and all the rest, shall be my care;
But shall I, then, forsake the unfinish'd war?
How would the Trojans brand great Hector's name!
And one base action sully all my fame,
Acquired by wounds and battles bravely fought!
O, how my soul abhors so mean a thought!
Long since I learn'd to slight this fleeting breath,
And view with cheerful eyes approaching death.
The inexorable sisters have decreed
That Priam's house, and Priam's self shall bleed:
The day will come, in which proud Troy shall yield,
And spread its smoking ruins o'er the field.
Yet Hecuba's, nor Priam's hoary age,
Whose blood shall quench some Grecian's thirsty rage,
Nor my brave brothers, that have bit the ground,
Their souls dismiss'd through many a ghastly wound,
Can in my bosom half that grief create,
As the sad thought of your impending fate:
When some proud Grecian dame shall tasks impose,
Mimic your tears, and ridicule your woes;

Beneath Hyperia's waters shall you sweat,
And, fainting, scarce support the liquid weight:
Then shall some Argive loud insulting cry,
Behold the wife of Hector, guard of Troy!
Tears, at my name, shall drown those beauteous eyes,
And that fair bosom heave with rising sighs!
Before that day, by some brave hero's hand
May I lie slain, and spurn the bloody sand.

To a Young Lady *on her* Birth-day.[1]

This tributary verse receive, my fair,
Warm with an ardent lover's fondest prayer.
May this returning day for ever find
Thy form more lovely, more adorned thy mind;
All pains, all cares, may favouring Heaven remove,
All but the sweet solicitudes of love!
May powerful nature join with grateful art,
To point each glance, and force it to the heart!
O then, when conquered crowds confess thy sway,
When ev'n proud wealth and prouder wit obey,
My fair, be mindful of the mighty trust:
Alas! 'tis hard for beauty to be just.
Those sovereign charms with strictest care employ,
Nor give the generous pain, the worthless joy:
With his own form acquaint the forward fool,
Shewn in the faithful glass of ridicule;
Teach mimic censure her own faults to find.
No more let coquettes to themselves be blind,
So shall Belinda's charms improve mankind.

The Young Author.[2]

When first the peasant, long inclin'd to roam,
Forsakes his rural sports and peaceful home,
Pleas'd with the scene the smiling ocean yields,
He scorns the verdant meads and flow'ry fields;
Then dances jocund o'er the watery way,
While the breeze whispers, and the streamers play:

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[1] Mr. Hector informs me, that this was made almost *impromptu*, in his presence. B.

[2] This was afterwards published with many alterations, and anonymously, in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1743.

Unbounded prospects in his bosom roll,
And future millions lift his rising soul;
In blissful dreams he digs the golden mine,
And raptur'd sees the new-found ruby shine.
Joys insincere! thick clouds invade the skies,
Loud roar the billows, high the waves arise;
Sick'ning with fear, he longs to view the shore,
And vows to trust the faithless deep no more.
So the young Author, panting after fame,
And the long honours of a lasting name,
Intrusts his happiness to human kind,
More false, more cruel, than the seas or wind.
"Toil on, dull crowd," in ecstacies he cries,
"For wealth or title, perishable prize;
"While I those transitory blessings scorn,
"Secure of praise from ages yet unborn."
This thought once form'd, all counsel comes too late,
He flies to press, and hurries on his fate;
Swiftly he sees the imagin'd laurels spread,
And feels the unfading wreath surround his head.
Warn'd by another's fate, vain youth, be wise;
Those dreams were Settle's once, and Ogilby's:
The pamphlet spreads, incessant hisses rise,
To some retreat the baffled writer flies;
Where no sour critics snarl, no sneers molest,
Safe from the tart lampoon, and stinging jest:
There begs of Heaven a less distinguish'd lot,
Glad to be hid, and proud to be forgot.

EPILOGUE, *intended to have been spoken by a* LADY *who was to personate the Ghost of* HERMIONE.[1]

YE blooming train, who give despair or joy,
Bless with a smile, or with a frown destroy;
In whose fair cheeks destructive Cupids wait,
And with unerring shafts distribute fate;
Whose snowy breasts, whose animated eyes,
Each youth admires, though each admirer dies;
Whilst you deride their pangs in barb'rous play,
Unpitying see them weep, and hear them pray,
And unrelenting sport ten thousand lives away;

[1] Some young ladies at Lichfield having proposed to act *The Distressed Mother* [by Ambrose Phillips], Johnson wrote this, and gave it to Mr. Hector to convey it privately to them. B.

For you, ye fair, I quit the gloomy plains,
Where sable night in all her horror reigns;
No fragrant bowers, no delightful glades,
Receive the unhappy ghosts of scornful maids
For kind, for tender nymphs, the myrtle blooms,
And weaves her bending boughs in pleasing glooms;
Perennial roses deck each purple vale,
And scents ambrosial breathe in every gale:
Far hence are banish'd vapours, spleen, and tears,
Tea, scandal, ivory teeth, and languid airs:
No pug, nor favourite Cupid there enjoys
The balmy kiss, for which poor Thyrsis dies;
Form'd to delight, they use no foreign arms,
Nor torturing whalebones pinch them into charms;
No conscious blushes there their cheeks inflame,
For those who feel no guilt can know no shame;
Unfaded still their former charms they shew,
Around them pleasures wait, and joys for ever new.
But cruel virgins meet severer fates;
Expell'd and exil'd from the blissful seats,
To dismal realms, and regions void of peace,
Where furies ever howl, and serpents hiss.
O'er the sad plains perpetual tempests sigh,
And pois'nous vapours, black'ning all the sky,
With livid hue the fairest face o'ercast,
And every beauty withers at the blast:
Where'er they fly their lovers' ghosts pursue,
Inflicting all those ills which once they knew;
Vexation, Fury, Jealousy, Despair,
Vex ev'ry eye, and every bosom tear;
Their foul deformities by all descried,
No maid to flatter, and no paint to hide.
Then melt, ye fair, while crowds around you sigh,
Nor let disdain sit lowering in your eye;
With pity soften every awful grace,
And beauty smile auspicious in each face;
To ease their pains exert your milder power,
So shall you guiltless reign, and all mankind adore.

The two years which he spent at home, after his return from Stourbridge, he passed in what he thought idleness, and was scolded by his father for his want of steady application. He had no settled plan of life, nor looked forward at all, but merely lived from day to day. Yet he read a

great deal in a desultory manner, without any scheme of study; as chance threw books in his way, and inclination directed him through them. He used to mention one curious instance of his casual reading, when but a boy. Having imagined that his brother had hid some apples behind a large folio upon an upper shelf in his father's shop, he climbed up to search for them. There were no apples; but the large folio proved to be Petrarch, whom he had seen mentioned, in some preface, as one of the restorers of learning. His curiosity having been thus excited, he sat down with avidity, and read a great part of the book. What he read during these two years, he told me, was not works of mere amusement, "Not voyages and travels, but all literature, Sir, all ancient writers, all manly: though but little Greek, only some of Anacreon and Hesiod: but in this irregular manner," added he, "I had looked into a great many books, which were not commonly known at the Universities, where they seldom read any books but what are put into their hands by their tutors; so that when I came to Oxford, Dr. Adams, now master of Pembroke College, told me, I was the best qualified for the University that he had ever known come there."

In estimating the progress of his mind during these two years, as well as in future periods of his life, we must not regard his own hasty confession of idleness; for we see, when he explains himself, that he was acquiring various stores; and indeed he himself concluded the account, with saying, "I would not have you think I was doing nothing then." He might, perhaps, have studied more assiduously; but it may be doubted, whether such a mind as his was not more enriched by roaming at large in the fields of literature than if it had been confined to any single spot. The analogy between body and mind is very general, and the parallel will hold as to their food, as well as any other particular. The flesh of animals who feed excursively, is allowed to have a higher flavour than that of those who are cooped up. May there not be the same difference between men who read as their taste prompts and

men who are confined in cells and colleges to stated tasks?

That a man in Mr. Michael Johnson's circumstances should think of sending his son to the expensive University of Oxford, at his own charge, seems very improbable. The subject was too delicate to question Johnson upon; but I have been assured by Dr. Taylor, that the scheme never would have taken place had not a gentleman of Shropshire, one of his schoolfellows, spontaneously undertaken to support him at Oxford, in the character of his companion: though, in fact, he never received any assistance whatever from that gentleman.[1]

He, however, went to Oxford, and was entered a commoner of Pembroke College, on the 31st of October, 1728, being then in his nineteenth year.

The Reverend Dr. Adams, who afterward presided over Pembroke College with universal esteem, told me he was present, and gave me some account of what passed on the night of Johnson's arrival at Oxford. On that evening, his father, who had anxiously accompanied him, found means to have him introduced to Mr. Jorden, who was to be his tutor. His being put under any tutor, reminds us of what Wood says of Robert Burton, author of the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, when elected student of Christ Church; "For form's sake, *though he wanted not a tutor*, he was put under the tuition of Dr. John Bancroft, afterward Bishop of Oxon."[2]

His father seemed very full of the merits of his son, and told the company he was a good scholar, and a poet, and wrote Latin verses. His figure and manner appeared strange to them; but he behaved modestly, and sat silent, till upon something which occurred in the course of conversation, he suddenly struck in and quoted Macrobius;

[1] According to Hawkins, this gentleman was Andrew Corbet, who was entered at Pembroke College in 1727. Croker thinks him more likely to have been Dr. Swinfen, who took his degree from Pembroke in 1712.

[2] *Athen. Oxon.* edit. 1721, i. 627. B.

and thus he gave the first impression of that more extensive reading in which he had indulged himself.

His tutor, Mr. Jorden, fellow of Pembroke, was not, it seems, a man of such abilities as we should conceive requisite for the instructor of Samuel Johnson, who gave me the following account of him. "He was a very worthy man, but a heavy man, and I did not profit much by his instructions. Indeed, I did not attend him much. The first day after I came to college, I waited upon him, and then stayed away four. On the sixth, Mr. Jorden asked me why I had not attended. I answered, I had been sliding in Christ Church meadow: and this I said with as much *nonchalance* as I am now talking to you.[1] I had no notion that I was wrong or irreverent to my tutor." BOSWELL: That, Sir, was great fortitude of mind. JOHNSON: No, Sir; stark insensibility.[2]

The fifth of November was at that time kept with great solemnity at Pembroke College, and exercises upon the subject of the day were required. Johnson neglected to perform his, which is much to be regretted; for his vivacity of imagination, and force of language, would probably have produced something sublime upon the gunpowder-plot. To apologise for his neglect, he gave in a short copy of verses entitled *Somnium*, containing a common thought; "That the Muse had come to him in his sleep, and whispered that it did not become him to write on such subjects as politics; he should confine himself to humbler themes:" but the versification was truly Virgilian.

He had a love and respect for Jorden, not for his literature, but for his worth. "Whenever," said he, "a young man becomes Jorden's pupil, he becomes his son."

Having given such a specimen of his poetical powers, he was asked by Mr. Jorden to translate Pope's *Messiah* into Latin verse, as a Christmas exercise. He performed it

[1] Oxford, 20th March, 1776. B.

[2] It ought to be remembered, that Dr. Johnson was apt, in his literary as well as moral exercises, to overcharge his defects. Dr. Adams informed me, that he attended his tutor's lectures, and also the lectures in the College Hall, very regularly. B.

with uncommon rapidity, and in so masterly a manner, that he obtained great applause from it, which ever after kept him high in the estimation of his College, and, indeed, of all the University.

It is said, that Mr. Pope expressed himself concerning it in terms of strong approbation. Dr. Taylor told me, that it was first printed for old Mr. Johnson, without the knowledge of his son, who was very angry when he heard of it. *A Miscellany of Poems*, collected by a person of the name of Husbands, was published at Oxford in 1731. In that *Miscellany* Johnson's translation of the *Messiah* appeared, with this modest motto from Scaliger's *Poetics*: "*Ex alieno ingenio poeta, ex suo tantum versificator.*"

I am not ignorant that critical objections have been made to this and other specimens of Johnson's Latin poetry. I acknowledge myself not competent to decide on a question of such extreme nicety. But I am satisfied with the just and discriminative eulogy pronounced upon it by my friend Mr. Courtenay.

"And with like ease his vivid lines assume
The garb and dignity of ancient Rome.—
Let college *verse-men* trite conceits express,
Trick'd out in splendid shreds of Virgil's dress;
From playful Ovid cull the tinsel phrase,
And vapid notions hitch in pilfer'd lays;
Then with mosaic art the piece combine,
And boast the glitter of each dulcet line:
Johnson adventur'd boldly to transfuse
His vigorous sense into the Latin Muse;
Aspir'd to shine by unreflected light,
And with a Roman's ardour *think* and write.
He felt the tuneful Nine his breast inspire,
And, like a master, wak'd the soothing lyre:
Horatian strains a grateful heart proclaim,
While Sky's wild rocks resound his Thralia's name.—
Hesperia's plant, in some less skilful hands,
To bloom awhile, factitious heat demands:
Though glowing Maro a faint warmth supplies,
The sickly blossom in the hot-house dies:
By Johnson's genial culture, art, and toil,
Its root strikes deep, and owns the fost'ring soil;

Imbibes our sun through all its swelling veins,
And grows a native of Britannia's plains."[1]

The "morbid melancholy," which was lurking in his constitution, and to which we may ascribe those particularities, and that aversion to regular life, which at a very early period marked his character, gathered such strength in his twentieth year, as to afflict him in a dreadful manner. While he was at Lichfield, in the college vacation of the year 1729, he felt himself overwhelmed with a horrible hypochondria, with perpetual irritation, fretfulness, and impatience; and with a dejection, gloom, and despair, which made existence misery. From this dismal malady he never afterward was perfectly relieved; and all his labours, and all his enjoyments, were but temporary interruptions of its baleful influence. How wonderful, how unsearchable are the ways of GOD! Johnson, who was blest with all the powers of genius and understanding, in a degree far above the ordinary state of human nature, was at the same time visited with a disorder so afflictive, that they who know it by dire experience will not envy his exalted endowments. That it was, in some degree, occasioned by a defect in his nervous system, that inexplicable part of our frame, appears highly probable. He told Mr. Paradise[2] that he was sometimes so languid and inefficient, that he could not distinguish the hour upon the town clock.

[1] *Poetical Review of the Literary and Moral Character of Dr. Johnson*, by John Courtenay, Esq. M.P. B. John Courtenay (1741—1816) sat in the House of Commons for thirty-two years, first for Tamworth and afterwards for Appleby. He was an ardent Whig, a bitter opponent of Warren Hastings, and an enthusiastic patron of the French Revolution. He was a frequent and clever speaker, though too fond of quoting Latin and French. His writings were less clever than his speeches, and fortunately also less frequent.

[2] An agreeable and well-educated gentleman of Greek extraction. Born at Salonica and educated at Padua, he spent the greater part of his life in London, where he became well known and liked in literary circles. He was a member of Johnson's Essex Street Club.

Johnson, upon the first violent attack of this disorder, strove to overcome it by forcible exertions. He frequently walked to Birmingham and back again, and tried many other expedients ;[1] but all in vain. His expression concerning it to me was, "I did not then know how to manage it." His distress became so intolerable, that he applied to Dr. Swinfen, physician in Lichfield, his godfather, and put into his hands a state of his case, written in Latin. Dr. Swinfen was so much struck with the extraordinary acuteness, research, and eloquence of this paper, that, in his zeal for his godson, he shewed it to several people. His daughter, Mrs. Desmoulins, who was many years humanely supported in Dr. Johnson's house in London, told me, that upon his discovering that Dr. Swinfen had communicated his case, he was so much offended, that he was never afterward fully reconciled to him. He indeed had good reason to be offended ; for though Dr. Swinfen's motive was good, he inconsiderately betrayed a matter deeply interesting and of great delicacy, which had been intrusted to him in confidence : and exposed a complaint of his young friend and patient, which, in the superficial opinion of the generality of mankind, is attended with contempt and disgrace.

But let not little men triumph upon knowing that Johnson was an HYPOCHONDRIAC, was subject to what the learned, philosophical, and pious Dr. Cheyne has so well treated under the title of "The English Malady." Though he suffered severely from it, he was not therefore degraded. The powers of his great mind might be troubled, and their full exercise suspended at times ; but the mind itself was ever entire. As a proof of this, it is only necessary to consider, that, when he was at the very worst, he composed that state of his own case, which shewed an uncommon vigour, not only of fancy and taste, but of judgment. I am aware that he himself was too ready to call such a complaint by the name of *madness ;* in conformity with which notion, he has traced its grada-

[1] See the *Rambler* (85) for the necessity of exercise for mind as well as body.

tions, with exquisite nicety, in one of the chapters of his RASSELAS. But there is surely a clear distinction between a disorder which affects only the imagination and spirits, while the judgment is sound, and a disorder by which the judgment itself is impaired. This distinction was made to me by the late Professor Gaubius of Leyden, physician to the Prince of Orange, in a conversation which I had with him several years ago; and he expounded it thus: "If," said he, "a man tells me that he is grievously disturbed, for that he *imagines* he sees a ruffian coming against him with a drawn sword, though at the same time he is *conscious* it is a delusion, I pronounce him to have a disordered imagination; but if a man tells me that he *sees* this, and in consternation calls to me to look at it, I pronounce him to be *mad*."

It is a common effect of low spirits or melancholy, to make those who are afflicted with it imagine that they are actually suffering those evils which happen to be most strongly presented to their minds. Some have fancied themselves to be deprived of the use of their limbs, some to labour under acute diseases, others to be in extreme poverty; when, in truth, there was not the least reality in any of the suppositions; so that when the vapours were dispelled, they were convinced of the delusion. To Johnson, whose supreme enjoyment was the exercise of his reason, the disturbance or obscuration of that faculty was the evil most to be dreaded. Insanity, therefore, was the object of his most dismal apprehension; and he fancied himself seized by it, or approaching to it, at the very time when he was giving proofs of a more than ordinary soundness and vigour of judgment. That his own diseased imagination should have so far deceived him is strange; but it is stranger still that some of his friends should have given credit to his groundless opinion, when they had such undoubted proofs that it was totally fallacious; though it is by no means surprising that those who wish to depreciate him, should, since his death, have laid hold of this circumstance, and insisted upon it with very unfair aggravation.

Amidst the oppression and distraction of a disease, which very few have felt in its full extent, but many have experienced in a slighter degree,[1] Johnson, in his writings, and in his conversation, never failed to display all the varieties of intellectual excellence. In his march through this world to a better, his mind still appeared grand and brilliant, and impressed all around him with the truth of Virgil's noble sentiment—

"Igneus est ollis vigor, et cœlestis origo."—*Æn.* vi. 730.

The history of his mind as to religion is an important article. I have mentioned the early impressions made upon his tender imagination by his mother, who continued her pious cares with assiduity, but, in his opinion, not with judgment. "Sunday," said he, "was a heavy day with me when I was a boy. My mother confined me on that day, and made me read *The Whole Duty of Man*, from a great part of which I could derive no instruction. When, for instance, I had read the chapter on theft, which, from my infancy, I had been taught was wrong, I was no more convinced that theft was wrong than before; so there was no accession of knowledge. A boy should be introduced to such books, by having his attention directed to the arrangement, to the style, and other excellences of composition; that the mind being thus engaged by an amusing variety of objects may not grow weary."

He communicated to me the following particulars upon the subject of his religious progress. "I fell into an inattention to religion, or an indifference about it, in my ninth year. The church at Lichfield, in which we had a seat, wanted reparation, so I was to go and find a seat in other churches; and having bad eyes, and being awkward about this, I used to go and read in the fields on Sunday. This habit continued till my fourteenth year; and still I find a great reluctance to go to church. I then became a sort of lax *talker* against religion, for I did not much

[1] Boswell himself suffered, or affected to suffer, from it, and wrote a series of essays in *The London Magazine* under the title of "The Hypochondriac."

think against it; and this lasted till I went to Oxford, where it would not be *suffered*. When at Oxford, I took up Law's *Serious Call to a Holy Life*[1] expecting to find it a dull book (as such books generally are), and perhaps to laugh at it. But I found Law quite an overmatch for me; and this was the first occasion of my thinking in earnest of religion, after I became capable of rational inquiry."[2]

[1] William Law (1686—1761), a non-juring divine of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Gibbon, whose father had been his pupil, has praised his *Serious Call* highly both for its religious and literary qualities.

[2] Mrs. Piozzi has given a strange fantastical account of the original of Dr. Johnson's belief in our most holy religion. "At the age of *ten* years his mind was disturbed by scruples of infidelity, which preyed upon his spirits, and made him very uneasy: the more so, as he revealed his uneasiness to none, being naturally, as he said, of a sullen temper, and reserved disposition. He searched, however, diligently, but fruitlessly, for evidences of the truth of revelation; and at length, *recollecting* a book he had *once* seen [*I suppose at five years old*] in his father's shop, entitled *De Veritate Religionis, &c.* he began to think himself *highly culpable* for neglecting such a means of information, and took himself severely to task for this *sin*, adding many acts of voluntary, and, to others, unknown *penance*. The first opportunity which offered, of course, he seized the book with avidity: but, on examination, *not finding himself scholar enough to peruse its contents*, set his heart at rest: and not thinking to inquire whether there were any English books written on the subject, followed his usual amusements, and *considered his conscience as lightened of a crime*. He redoubled his diligence to learn the language that contained the information he most wished for; but from the pain which *guilt* [*namely, having omitted to read what he did not understand*] had given him, he now began to deduce the soul's immortality, [*a sensation of pain in this world, being an unquestionable proof of existence in another*] which was the point that belief first stopped at; *and from that moment resolving to be a Christian*, became one of the most zealous and pious ones our nation ever produced." *Anecdotes*, p. 17. This is one of the numerous misrepresentations of this lively lady, which it is worth while to correct; for if credit should be given to such a childish, irrational, and ridiculous statement of the foundation of Dr. Johnson's faith in Christianity, how little credit would be due to it. Mrs. Piozzi seems to wish, that the world should think Dr.

From this time forward religion was the predominant object of his thoughts; though, with the just sentiments of a conscientious Christian, he lamented that his practice of its duties fell far short of what it ought to be.

This instance of a mind such as that of Johnson being first disposed, by an unexpected incident, to think with anxiety of the momentous concerns of eternity, and of "what he should do to be saved," may for ever be produced in opposition to the superficial and sometimes profane contempt that has been thrown upon those occasional impressions which it is certain many Christians have experienced; though it must be acknowledged that weak minds, from an erroneous supposition that no man is in a state of grace who has not felt a particular conversion, have, in some cases, brought a degree of ridicule upon them; a ridicule, of which it is inconsiderate or unfair to make a general application.

How seriously Johnson was impressed with a sense of religion, even in the vigour of his youth, appears from the following passage in his minutes, kept by way of diary: "Sept. 7, 1736. I have this day entered upon my 28th year. Mayest thou, O God, enable me, for Jesus Christ's sake, to spend this in such a manner, that I may receive comfort from it at the hour of death, and in the day of judgment! Amen."

This particular course of his reading while at Oxford, and during the time of vacation which he passed at home, cannot be traced. Enough has been said of his irregular mode of study. He told me, that from his earliest years he loved to read poetry, but hardly ever read any poem to an end;[1] that he read Shakespeare at a period so early,

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Johnson also under the influence of that easy logic, *Stet pro ratione voluntas.* B.

[1] He told Windham that he had never read the Odyssey through. Murphy (*Essay on Dr. Johnson*) doubted whether he had ever read any book through but the Bible. Mrs. Piozzi relates that he once asked if there were any book "Written by mere man that was wished longer by its readers excepting *Don Quixote*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and the *Pilgrim's Progress?*" It will

that the speech of the Ghost in *Hamlet* terrified him when he was alone; that Horace's Odes were the compositions in which he took most delight, and it was long before he liked his Epistles and Satires. He told me what he read *solidly* at Oxford was Greek; not the Grecian historians, but Homer and Euripides, and now and then a little Epigram; that the study of which he was the most fond was Metaphysics, but he had not read much, even in that way. I always thought that he did himself injustice in his account of what he had read, and that he must have been speaking with reference to the vast portion of study which is possible, and to which few scholars in the whole history of literature have attained; for when I once asked him whether a person, whose name I have now forgotten, studied hard, he answered: "No, Sir. I do not believe he studied hard. I never knew a man who studied hard. I conclude, indeed, from the effects, that some men have studied hard, as Bentley and Clarke."[1] Trying him by that criterion upon which he formed his judgment of others, we may be absolutely certain, both from his writings and his conversation, that his reading was very extensive. Dr. Adam Smith, than whom few were better judges on this subject, once observed to me that, "Johnson knew more books than any man alive." He had a peculiar facility in seizing at once what was valuable in any book, without submitting to the labour of perusing it from beginning to end. He had, from the irritability of his constitution, at all times, an impatience and hurry when he either read or wrote. A certain apprehension arising from novelty, made him write his first exercise at College twice over; but he never took that trouble with any other composition; and we shall see that his most excellent works were struck off at a heat, with rapid exertion.[2]

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be seen however, that he once boasted of having read Fielding's *Amelia* through at a sitting.

[1] See note to the Dedication.

[2] He told Dr. Burney, that he never wrote any of his works that were printed, twice over. But he made large corrections in the second edition of the *Rambler*, and in the third edition of the

Yet he appears, from his early notes or memorandums in my possession, to have at various times attempted, or at least planned, a methodical course of study, according to computation, of which he was all his life fond, as it fixed his attention steadily upon something without, and prevented his mind from preying upon itself. Thus I find in his handwriting the number of lines in each of two of Euripides' Tragedies, of the Georgics of Virgil, of the first six books of the Æneid, of Horace's Art of Poetry, of three of the books of Ovid's Metamorphoses, of some parts of Theocritus, and of the Tenth Satire of Juvenal; and a table, showing at the rate of various numbers a day (I suppose verses to be read), what would be, in each case, the total amount in a week, month, and year.

No man had a more ardent love of literature, or a higher respect for it, than Johnson. His apartment in Pembroke College was that upon the second floor over the gateway. The enthusiast of learning will ever contemplate it with veneration. One day, while he was sitting in it quite alone, Dr. Panting, then master of the College, whom he called "a fine Jacobite fellow," overheard him uttering this soliloquy in his strong emphatic voice: "Well, I have a mind to see what is done in other places of learning. I'll go and visit the Universities abroad. I'll go to France and Italy. I'll go to Padua.—And I'll mind my business. For an *Athenian* blockhead is the worst of all blockheads."[1]

Dr. Adams told me that Johnson, while he was at Pembroke College, "was caressed and loved by all about him, was a gay and frolicsome fellow, and passed there the happiest part of his life." But this is a striking proof of the fallacy of appearances, and how little any of us know of the real internal state even of those whom we see most frequently; for the truth is, that he was then

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Lives of the Poets the variations were so considerable as to be printed in a separate pamphlet for the use of former purchasers.

[1] I had this anecdote from Dr. Adams, and Dr. Johnson confirmed it. Bramston, in his *Man of Taste*, has the same thought: "Sure, of all blockheads, scholars are the worst." B.

depressed by poverty, and irritated by disease. When I mentioned to him this account as given me by Dr. Adams, he said, "Ah, Sir, I was mad and violent. It was bitterness which they mistook for frolic. I was miserably poor, and I thought to fight my way by my literature and my wit; so I disregarded all power and all authority."

The Bishop of Dromore observes in a letter to me,

"The pleasure he took in vexing the tutors and fellows has been often mentioned. But I have heard him say, what ought to be recorded to the honour of the present venerable master of that College, the Reverend William Adams, D.D., who was then very young, and one of the junior fellows; that the mild but judicious expostulations of this worthy man, whose virtue awed him, and whose learning he revered, made him really ashamed of himself, 'Though I fear,' said he, 'I was too proud to own it.'

"I have heard from some of his contemporaries that he was generally seen lounging at the College gate, with a circle of young students round him, whom he was entertaining with wit, and keeping from their studies, if not spiriting them up to rebellion against the College discipline, which in his maturer years he so much extolled."

He very early began to attempt keeping notes or memorandums, by way of a diary of his life. I find, in a parcel of loose leaves, the following spirited resolution to contend against his natural indolence: "Oct. 1729. *Desidiæ valedixi; sirenis istius cantibus surdam posthac aurem obversurus.*—I bid farewell to Sloth, being resolved henceforth not to listen to her siren strains." I have also in my possession a few leaves of another *Libellus*, or little book, entitled ANNALES, in which some of the early particulars of his history are registered in Latin.

I do not find that he formed any close intimacies with his fellow-collegians. But Dr. Adams told me, that he contracted a love and regard for Pembroke College, which he retained to the last. A short time before his death he sent to that College a present of all his works, to be deposited in their library; and he had thoughts of leaving to it his house at Lichfield; but his friends who were about him very properly dissuaded him from it, and he bequeathed it to some poor relations. He took a pleasure

in boasting of the many eminent men who had been educated at Pembroke. In this list are found the names of Mr. Hawkins, the Poetry Professor, Mr. Shenstone, Sir William Blackstone, and others;[1] not forgetting the celebrated popular preacher, Mr. George Whitefield, of whom, though Dr. Johnson did not think very highly, it must be acknowledged that his eloquence was powerful, his views pious and charitable, his assiduity almost incredible; and that, since his death, the integrity of his character has been fully vindicated. Being himself a poet, Johnson was peculiarly happy in mentioning how many of the sons of Pembroke were poets; adding, with a smile of sportive triumph, "Sir, we are a nest of singing birds."

He was not, however, blind to what he thought the defects of his own College: and I have, from the information of Dr. Taylor, a very strong instance of that rigid honesty which he ever inflexibly preserved. Taylor had obtained his father's consent to be entered of Pembroke, that he might be with his schoolfellow Johnson, with whom, though some years older than himself, he was very intimate. This would have been a great comfort to Johnson. But he fairly told Taylor that he could not, in conscience, suffer him to enter where he knew he could not have an able tutor. He then made inquiry all round the University, and having found that Mr. Bateman, of Christ-Church, was the tutor of highest reputation, Taylor was entered of that College. Mr. Bateman's lectures were so excellent, that Johnson used to come and get them at second-hand from Taylor, till his poverty being so extreme, that his shoes were worn out, and his feet appeared through them, he saw that this humiliating circumstance was perceived by the Christ-Church men, and he came no more. He was too proud to accept of money,

[1] See Nash's *History of Worcestershire*, vol. i. p. 529. B. Among the others (educated either at Pembroke or at Broadgates Hall which was converted into Pembroke in 1624) were Bishop Bonner, Francis Beaumont, Sir Thomas Browne, Lord Chancellor Harcourt, John Pym, and Francis Rous, Provost of Eton and Speaker of the Barebones Parliament.

and somebody having set a pair of new shoes at his door, he threw them away with indignation. How must we feel when we read such an anecdote of Samuel Johnson!

His spirited refusal of an eleemosynary supply of shoes arose, no doubt, from a proper pride. But, considering his ascetic disposition at times, as acknowledged by himself in his Meditations, and the exaggerations with which some have treated the peculiarities of his character, I should not wonder to hear it ascribed to a principle of superstitious mortification; as we are told by Tursellinus, in his *Life of St. Ignatius Loyola*, that this intrepid founder of the order of Jesuits, when he arrived at Goa, after having made a severe pilgrimage through the eastern deserts, persisted in wearing his miserable shattered shoes, and when new ones were offered him, rejected them as an unsuitable indulgence.

The *res angusta domi* prevented him from having the advantage of a complete academical education. The friend to whom he had trusted for support had deceived him. His debts in College, though not great, were increasing; and his scanty remittances from Lichfield, which had all along been made with great difficulty, could be supplied no longer, his father having fallen into a state of insolvency. Compelled, therefore, by irresistible necessity, he left the College in autumn, 1731, without a degree, having been a member of it little more than three years.[1]

Dr. Adams, the worthy and respectable master of Pembroke College, has generally had the reputation of being Johnson's tutor. The fact, however, is, that in 1731, Mr. Jorden quitted the College, and his pupils were transferred to Dr. Adams; so that had Johnson returned, Dr. Adams *would have been his tutor*. It is to be wished, that this connexion had taken place. His equal temper, mild disposition, and politeness of manners, might have insensibly softened the harshness of Johnson, and infused into him those more delicate charities, those *petites*

[1] He really resided only fourteen months, from October 31, 1728, to December 12, 1729; but his name remained on the books of the College till October 8, 1731.

morales, in which, it must be confessed, our great moralist was more deficient than his best friends could fully justify. Dr. Adams paid Johnson this high compliment. He said to me at Oxford, in 1776, "I was his nominal tutor; but he was above my mark." When I repeated it to Johnson, his eyes flashed with grateful satisfaction, and he exclaimed, "That was liberal and noble."

And now (I had almost said *poor*) Samuel Johnson returned to his native city, destitute, and not knowing how he should gain even a decent livelihood. His father's misfortunes in trade rendered him unable to support his son: and for some time there appeared no means by which he could maintain himself. In the December of this year his father died.

The state of poverty in which he died, appears from a note in one of Johnson's little diaries of the following year, which strongly displays his spirit and virtuous dignity of mind. "1732, *Julii* 15. *Undecim aureos deposui, quo die quicquid ante matris funus (quod serum sit precor) de paternis bonis sperari licet, viginti scilicet libras, accepi. Usque adeo mihi fortuna fingenda est. Interea, ne paupertate vires animi languescant, nec in flagitia egestas abigat, cavendum.*—I layed by eleven guineas on this day, when I received twenty pounds, being all that I have reason to hope for out of my father's effects, previous to the death of my mother; an event which I pray God may be very remote. I now therefore see that I must make my own fortune. Meanwhile let me take care that the powers of my mind be not debilitated by poverty, and that indigence do not force me into any criminal act."

Johnson was so far fortunate, that the respectable character of his parents, and his own merit, had, from his earliest years, secured him a kind reception in the best families at Lichfield. Among these I can mention Mr. Howard, Dr. Swinfen, Mr. Simpson, Mr. Levett, Captain Garrick, father of the great ornament of the British stage; but above all, Mr. Gilbert Walmsley,[1] Registrar

[1] Mr. Warton informs me, "That this early friend of Johnson was entered a commoner of Trinity College, Oxford, aged 17, in

of the Ecclesiastical Court of Lichfield, whose character, long after his decease, Dr. Johnson has, in his life of Edmund Smith (*Lives of the Poets*), thus drawn in the glowing colours of gratitude:

"Of Gilbert Walmsley, thus presented to my mind, let me indulge myself in the remembrance. I knew him very early; he was one of the first friends that literature procured me, and I hope, that at least, my gratitude made me worthy of his notice.

"He was of an advanced age, and I was only not a boy, yet he never received my notions with contempt. He was a Whig, with all the virulence and malevolence of his party; yet difference of opinion did not keep us apart. I honoured him, and he endured me.

"He had mingled with the gay world, without exemption from its vices or its follies, but had never neglected the cultivation of his mind. His belief of revelation was unshaken; his learning preserved his principles; he grew first regular, and then pious.

"His studies had been so various, that I am not able to name a man of equal knowledge. His acquaintance with books was great, and what he did not immediately know, he could, at least, tell where to find. Such was his amplitude of learning, and such his copiousness of communication, that it may be doubted whether a day now passes, in which I have not some advantage from his friendship.

"At this man's table I enjoyed many cheerful and instructive hours, with companions such as are not often found—with one who has lengthened, and one who has gladdened life; with Dr. James,[1] whose skill in physic will be long remembered; and with David Garrick, whom I hoped to have gratified with this character of our common friend. But what are the hopes of man! I am disappointed by that stroke of death, which has eclipsed the gaiety of nations, and impoverished the public stock of harmless pleasure."

In these families he passed much time in his early years. In most of them, he was in the company of

1698; and is the author of many Latin verse translations in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. One of them is a translation of 'My time, O ye Muses, was happily spent,'" &c. He died August 3, 1751, and a monument to his memory has been erected in the cathedral of Lichfield, with an inscription written by Mr. Seward, one of the prebendaries. B.

[1] See *post*, p. 109.

ladies, particularly at Mr. Walmsley's, whose wife and sisters-in-law, of the name of Aston, and daughters of a baronet, were remarkable for good breeding; so that the notion which has been industriously circulated and believed, that he never was in good company till late in life, and consequently had been confirmed in coarse and ferocious manners by long habits, is wholly without foundation. Some of the ladies have assured me, they recollected him well when a young man, as distinguished for his complaisance.

And that his politeness was not merely occasional and temporary, or confined to the circles of Lichfield, is ascertained by the testimony of a lady, who, in a paper with which I have been favoured by a daughter of his intimate friend and physician, Dr. Lawrence, thus describes Dr. Johnson some years afterward:

"As the particulars of the former part of Dr. Johnson's life do not seem to be very accurately known, a lady hopes that the following information may not be unacceptable.

"She remembers Dr. Johnson on a visit to Dr. Taylor, at Ashbourn, sometime between the end of the year '37, and the middle of the year '40; she rather thinks it to have been after he and his wife were removed to London. During his stay at Ashbourn, he made frequent visits to Mr. Meynell, at Bradley, where his company was much desired by the ladies of the family, who were, perhaps, in point of elegance and accomplishments, inferior to few of those with whom he was afterward acquainted. Mr. Meynell's eldest daughter was afterward married to Mr. Fitzherbert, father to Mr. Alleyne Fitzherbert, lately minister to the court of Russia. Of her, Dr. Johnson said, in Dr. Lawrence's study, that she had the best understanding he ever met with in any human being. At Mr. Meynell's he also commenced that friendship with Mrs. Hill Boothby, sister to the present Sir Brook Boothby, which continued till her death. The *young woman whom he used to call Molly Aston*,[1] was sister to Sir Thomas

[1] The words of Sir John Hawkins, p. 316. B. "Molly," said Johnson (according to Mrs. Piozzi), "was a beauty and a scholar, and a wit and a Whig; and she talked all in praise of liberty; and so I made this epigram upon her—she was the loveliest creature I ever saw:—

Aston, and daughter to a baronet; she was also sister to the wife of his friend, Mr. Gilbert Walmsley. Besides his intimacy with the above-mentioned persons, who were surely people of rank and education, while he was yet at Lichfield he used to be frequently at the house of Dr. Swinfen, a gentleman of very ancient family in Staffordshire, from which, after the death of his elder brother, he inherited a good estate. He was, besides, a physician of very extensive practice; but for want of due attention to the management of his domestic concerns, left a very large family in indigence. One of his daughters, Mrs. Desmoulins, afterward found an asylum in the house of her old friend, whose doors were always open to the unfortunate, and who well observed the precept of the Gospel, for he 'was kind to the unthankful and to the evil.'"

In the forlorn state of his circumstances, he accepted of an offer to be employed as usher in the school of Market-Bosworth, in Leicestershire, to which it appears, from one of his little fragments of a diary, that he went on foot, on the 16th of July.—"*Julii* 16, *Bosvortiam pedes petii.*" But it is not true, as has been erroneously related, that he was assistant to the famous Anthony Blackwall, whose merit has been honoured by the testimony of Bishop Hurd,[1] who was his scholar; for Mr. Blackwall died on

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Liber ut esse velim suasisti pulchra Maria;
Ut maneam liber—pulchra Maria vale.

The eldest sister, Catherine, married another of Johnson's friends, the Hon. Henry Hervey, fourth son of the first Earl of Bristol.

[1] It was not Blackwall who was praised by Hurd (in the dedicatory epistle prefixed to his *Commentary on Horace's Art of Poetry*), but the Rev. Mr. Budworth, head-master of the grammar school at Brewood in Staffordshire, who had been bred under Blackwall. Johnson is said, on the authority of Captain Budworth, the clergyman's grandson, to have applied for the post of usher in the school at Brewood, and to have been refused on the ground that his paralytic affection might make him ridiculous to the pupils. According to a letter preserved in the records of Pembroke College, and first printed by Croker, the same objection, coupled with a charge of bad manners and temper, was raised when Gilbert Walmsley tried a few years later to procure for him the mastership of Solihull Grammar-School in Warwickshire.

the 8th of April, 1730,[1] more than a year before Johnson left the University.

This employment was very irksome to him in every respect, and he complained grievously of it in his letters to his friend, Mr. Hector, who was now settled as a surgeon at Birmingham. The letters are lost; but Mr. Hector recollects his writing "That the poet had described the dull sameness of his existence in these words '*Vitam continet una dies*' (one day contains the whole of my life); that it was unvaried as the note of the cuckoo; and that he did not know whether it was more disagreeable for him to teach, or the boys to learn, the grammar rules." His general aversion to this painful drudgery was greatly enhanced by a disagreement between him and Sir Wolstan Dixie, the patron of the school, in whose house, I have been told, he officiated as a kind of domestic chaplain, so far, at least, as to say grace at table, but was treated with what he represented as intolerable harshness; and, after suffering for a few months such complicated misery, he relinquished a situation which all his life afterward he recollected with the strongest aversion, and even a degree of horror. But it is probable that at this period, whatever uneasiness he may have endured, he laid the foundation of much future eminence by application to his studies.

Being now again totally unoccupied, he was invited by Mr. Hector to pass some time with him at Birmingham, as his guest, at the house of Mr. Warren, with whom Mr. Hector lodged and boarded. Mr. Warren was the first established bookseller in Birmingham, and was very attentive to Johnson, whom he soon found could be of much service to him in his trade, by his knowledge of literature; and he even obtained the assistance of his pen in furnishing some numbers of a periodical Essay printed in the newspaper, of which Warren was proprietor. After very diligent inquiry, I have not been able to recover those early specimens of that particular mode of writing

[1] See *Gent. Mag.*, Dec. 1784, p. 957. B.

by which Johnson afterward so greatly distinguished himself.

He continued to live as Mr. Hector's guest for about six months, and then hired lodgings in another part of the town, finding himself as well situated at Birmingham as he supposed he could be any where, while he had no settled plan of life, and very scanty means of subsistence. He made some valuable acquaintances there, amongst whom were Mr. Porter, a mercer, whose widow he afterward married, and Mr. Taylor, who, by his ingenuity in mechanical inventions, and his success in trade, acquired an immense fortune. But the comfort of being near Mr. Hector, his old schoolfellow and intimate friend, was Johnson's chief inducement to continue here.

In what manner he employed his pen at this period, or whether he derived from it any pecuniary advantage, I have not been able to ascertain. He probably got a little money from Mr. Warren; and we are certain, that he executed here one piece of literary labour, of which Mr. Hector has favoured me with a minute account. Having mentioned that he had read at Pembroke College a Voyage to Abyssinia, by Lobo, a Portuguese Jesuit, and that he thought an abridgment and translation of it from the French into English might be a useful and profitable publication, Mr. Warren and Mr. Hector joined in urging him to undertake it.[1] He accordingly agreed; and the book not being to be found in Birmingham, he borrowed it of Pembroke College. A part of the work being very soon done, one Osborn, who was Mr. Warren's printer, was set to work with what was ready, and Johnson engaged to supply the press with copy as it should be

[1] *The History of Ethiopia*, published at Coimbra in 1659, was not Lobo's work, though often mistaken for it, and owing much to it. It does not appear that Lobo's *History* was ever printed. The manuscript was deposited in the library of the monastery of San Roque at Lisbon, from which some passages were published in English by the Royal Society in 1669. The French translation by the Abbé Legrand, from which Johnson's abridgment was made, was published at Paris in 1728.

wanted; but his constitutional indolence soon prevailed, and the work was at a stand. Mr. Hector, who knew that a motive of humanity would be the most prevailing argument with his friend, went to Johnson, and represented to him, that the printer could have no other employment till this undertaking was finished, and that the poor man and his family were suffering. Johnson upon this exerted the powers of his mind, though his body was relaxed. He lay in bed with the book, which was a quarto, before him, and dictated while Hector wrote. Mr. Hector carried the sheets to the press, and corrected almost all the proof sheets, very few of which were even seen by Johnson. In this manner, with the aid of Mr. Hector's active friendship, the book was completed, and was published in 1735, with London upon the title-page, though it was in reality printed at Birmingham, a device too common with provincial publishers. For this work he had from Mr. Warren only the sum of five guineas.

This being the first prose work of Johnson, it is a curious object of inquiry how much may be traced in it of that style which marks his subsequent writings with such peculiar excellence; with so happy a union of force, vivacity, and perspicuity. I have perused the book with this view, and have found that here, as I believe in every other translation, there is in the work itself no vestige of the translator's own style; for the language of translation being adapted to the thoughts of another person, insensibly follows their cast, and as it were runs into a mould that is ready prepared.

Thus, for instance, taking the first sentence that occurs at the opening of the book, p. 4.

"I lived here above a year, and completed my studies in divinity; in which time some letters were received from the fathers of Ethiopia, with an account that Sultan Segued, Emperor of Abyssinia, was converted to the church of Rome; that many of his subjects had followed his example; and that there was a great want of missionaries to improve these prosperous beginnings. Everybody was very desirous of seconding the zeal of our fathers,

and of sending them the assistance they requested; to which we were the more encouraged, because the Emperor's letter informed our provincial, that we might easily enter his dominions by the way of Dancala; but, unhappily, the secretary wrote Zeila for Dancala, which cost two of our fathers their lives."

Every one acquainted with Johnson's manner will be sensible that there is nothing of it here; but that this sentence might have been composed by any other man.

But, in the Preface, the Johnsonian style begins to appear; and though use had not yet taught his wing a permanent and equable flight, there are parts of it which exhibit his best manner in full vigour. I had once the pleasure of examining it with Mr. Edmund Burke, who confirmed me in this opinion, by his superior critical sagacity, and was, I remember, much delighted with the following specimen:

"The Portuguese traveller, contrary to the general vein of his countrymen, has amused his reader with no romantic absurdities, or incredible fictions; whatever he relates, whether true or not, is at least probable; and he who tells nothing exceeding the bounds of probability, has a right to demand that they should believe him who cannot contradict him.

"He appears by his modest and unaffected narration, to have described things as he saw them, to have copied nature from the life, and to have consulted his senses, not his imagination. He meets with no basilisks that destroy with their eyes; his crocodiles devour their prey without tears, and his cataracts fall from the rocks without deafening the neighbouring inhabitants.

"The reader will here find no regions cursed with irremediable barrenness, or blest with spontaneous fecundity; no perpetual gloom, or unceasing sunshine; nor are the nations here described either devoid of all sense of humanity, or consummate in all private and social virtues. Here are no Hottentots without religion, polity or articulate language; no Chinese perfectly polite, and completely skilled in all sciences; he will discover, what will always be discovered by a diligent and impartial inquirer, that wherever human nature is to be found, there is a mixture of vice and virtue, a contest of passion and reason; and that the Creator doth not appear partial in his distributions, but has balanced, in most countries, their particular inconveniences by particular favours."

Here we have an early example of that brilliant and energetic expression, which, upon innumerable occasions

in his subsequent life, justly impressed the world with the highest admiration.

Nor can any one, conversant with the writings of Johnson, fail to discern his hand in this passage of the Dedication to John Warren, Esq. of Pembrokeshire, though it is ascribed to Warren the bookseller.

"A generous and elevated mind is distinguished by nothing more certainly than an eminent degree of curiosity;[1] nor is that curiosity ever more agreeably or usefully employed, than in examining the laws and customs of foreign nations. I hope, therefore, the present I now presume to make, will not be thought improper; which, however, it is not my business as a dedicator to commend, nor as a bookseller to depreciate."

It is reasonable to suppose, that his having been thus accidentally led to a particular study of the history and manners of Abyssinia, was the remote occasion of his writing, many years afterward, his admirable philosophical tale, the principal scene of which is laid in that country.

Johnson returned to Lichfield early in 1734, and in August that year he made an attempt to procure some little subsistence by his pen; for he published proposals for printing by subscription the Latin Poems of Politian:[2] "*Angeli Politiani Poemata Latina, quibus Notas, cum historia Latinæ poeseos, a Petrarchæ ævo ad Politiani tempora deducta, et vita Politiani fusius quam antehac enarrata, addidit* Sam. Johnson."[3]

[1] See *Rambler*, No. 103. B.

[2] May we not trace a fanciful similarity between Politian and Johnson? Huetius, speaking of Paulus Pelissonius Fontanerius, says, "—In quo Natura, ut olim in Angelo Politiano, deformitatem oris excellentis ingenii præstantia compensavit." *Comment. de Reb. ad eum pertin.* Edit. Amstel. 1718, p. 200. B.—Huetius was Huet, Bishop of Avranche, who wrote Memoirs of his own time in Latin, from which, Croker has pointed out, Boswell extracted this bit of pedantry. Paulus Pelissonius Fontanerius was Madame de Sévigné's friend Pelisson, of whom was used the phrase which has since grown into a proverb: "Qu'il abusait de la permission qu'ont les hommes d'être laids."

[3] The book was to contain more than thirty sheets; the price

It appears that his brother Nathaniel had taken up his father's trade; for it is mentioned that "subscriptions are taken in by the Editor, or N. Johnson, bookseller, of Lichfield."[1] Notwithstanding the merit of Johnson, and the cheap price at which his book was offered, there were not subscribers enough to ensure a sufficient sale; so the work never appeared, and probably never was executed.

We find him again this year at Birmingham, and there is preserved the following letter from him to Mr. Edward Cave,[2] the original compiler and editor of the Gentleman's Magazine:

"TO MR. CAVE.

"*Nov.* 25, 1734.

"SIR,

"As you appear no less sensible than your readers of the defects of your poetical article, you will not be displeased, if, in order to the improvement of it, I communicate to you the sentiments of a person, who will undertake, on reasonable terms, sometimes to fill a column.

"His opinion is, that the public would not give you a bad reception, if, beside the current wit of the month, which a critical examination would generally reduce to a narrow compass, you admitted not only poems, inscriptions, &c., never printed before, which he will sometimes supply you with; but likewise short literary dissertations in Latin or English, critical remarks on authors ancient or modern, forgotten poems that deserve revival, or loose pieces, like Floyer's,[3] worth preserving. By this method,

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to be two shillings and sixpence at the time of subscribing, and two shillings and sixpence at the delivery of a perfect book in quires. B.

[1] After Nathaniel's death his mother kept on the shop so long as she lived. Lucy Porter (Johnson's step-daughter) used to board with old Mrs. Johnson, according to Miss Seward, and serve in the shop.

[2] Miss Cave, the grand-niece of Mr. Edw. Cave, has obligingly shewn me the originals of this and the other letters of Dr. Johnson to him, which were first published in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, with notes by Mr. John Nichols, the worthy and indefatigable editor of that valuable miscellany signed N.; some of which I shall occasionally transcribe in the course of this work. B.

[3] Sir John Floyer's *Treatise on Cold Baths*, *Gent. Mag.*, 1734, p. 197. B.

your literary article, for so it might be called, will, he thinks, be better recommended to the public than by low jests, awkward buffoonery, or the dull scurrilities of either party.

"If such a correspondence will be agreeable to you, be pleased to inform me in two posts, what the conditions are on which you shall expect it. Your late offer [1] gives me no reason to distrust your generosity. If you engage in any literary projects besides this paper, I have other designs to impart, if I could be secure from having others reap the advantage of what I should hint.

"Your letter by being directed to *S. Smith*, to be left at the Castle in Birmingham, Warwickshire, will reach

"Your humble servant."

Mr. Cave has put a note on this letter. "Answered Dec. 2." But whether anything was done in consequence of it we are not informed.

Johnson had, from his early youth, been sensible to the influence of female charms. When at Stourbridge school, he was much enamoured of Olivia Lloyd, a young Quaker, to whom he wrote a copy of verses, which I have not been able to recover; but with what facility and elegance he could warble the amorous lay, will appear from the following lines which he wrote for his friend Mr. Edmund Hector.

VERSES *to a* LADY, *on receiving from her a* SPRIG *of* MYRTLE.

"What hopes, what terrors does thy gift create,
Ambiguous emblem of uncertain fate!
The myrtle, ensign of supreme command,
Consign'd by Venus to Melissa's hand;
Not less capricious than a reigning fair,
Now grants, and now rejects a lover's prayer.
In myrtle shades oft sings the happy swain;
In myrtle shades despairing ghosts complain;
The myrtle crowns the happy lovers' heads,
The unhappy lover's grave the myrtle spreads:

[1] A prize of fifty pounds for the best poem "on Life, Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell." See *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. iv. p. 560. N. (B.)

O then the meaning of thy gift impart,
And ease the throbbings of an anxious heart!
Soon must this bough, as you shall fix his doom,
Adorn Philander's head, or grace his tomb."[1]

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[1] Mrs. Piozzi gives the following account of this little composition from Dr. Johnson's own relation to her, on her inquiring whether it was rightly attributed to him:—"I think it is now just forty years ago, that a young fellow had a sprig of myrtle given him by a girl he courted, and asked me to write him some verses that he might present her in return. I promised, but forgot; and when he called for his lines at the time agreed on—Sit still a moment, (says I) dear Mund, and I'll fetch them thee—so stepped aside for five minutes, and wrote the nonsense you now keep such a stir about."—*Anecdotes*, p. 34. In my first edition I was induced to doubt the authenticity of this account, by the following circumstantial statement in a letter to me from Miss Seward, of Lichfield:—"I *know* those verses were addressed to Lucy Porter, when he was enamoured of her in his boyish days, two or three years before he had seen her mother, his future wife. He wrote them at my grandfather's, and gave them to Lucy in the presence of my mother, to whom he shewed them on the instant. She used to repeat them to me, when I asked her for *the Verses Dr. Johnson gave her on a Sprig of Myrtle, which he had stolen or begged from her bosom.* We all know honest Lucy Porter to have been incapable of the mean vanity of applying to herself a compliment not *intended* for her." Such was this lady's statement, which I make no doubt she supposed to be correct; but it shews how dangerous it is to trust too implicitly to traditional testimony and ingenious inference; for Mr. Hector has lately assured me that Mrs. Piozzi's account is in this instance accurate, and that he was the person for whom Johnson wrote those verses, which have been erroneously ascribed to Mr. Hammond. I am obliged in so many instances to notice Mrs. Piozzi's incorrectness of relation, that I gladly seize this opportunity of acknowledging, that however often, she is not always inaccurate.

The author having been drawn into a controversy with Miss Anna Seward, in consequence of the preceding statement, (which may be found in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. lxiii. and lxiv.) received the following letter from Mr. Edmund Hector, on the subject:

"Dear Sir,—I am sorry to see you are engaged in altercation with a lady who seems unwilling to be convinced of her errors. Surely it would be more ingenuous to acknowledge than to per-

His juvenile attachments to the fair sex were, however, very transient ; and it is certain, that he formed no criminal connexion whatsoever. Mr. Hector, who lived with him in his younger days in the utmost intimacy and social freedom, has assured me, that even at that ardent season his conduct was strictly virtuous in that respect ; and that though he loved to exhilarate himself with wine, he never knew him intoxicated but once.

In a man whom religious education has secured from licentious indulgences, the passion of love, when once it has seized him, is exceedingly strong ; being unimpaired by dissipation, and totally concentrated in one object. This was experienced by Johnson, when he became the fervent admirer of Mrs. Porter, after her first husband's death. Miss Porter told me, that when he was first introduced to her mother, his appearance was very forbidding : he was then lean and lank, so that his immense structure of bones was hideously striking to the eye, and the scars of the scrofula were deeply visible. He also wore his hair, which was straight and stiff, and separated behind : and he often had, seemingly, convulsive starts and odd gesticulations, which tended to excite at once

severe. Lately, in looking over some papers I meant to burn, I found the original manuscript of the myrtle, with the date on it, 1731, which I have enclosed. The true history (which I could swear to) is as follows : Mr. Morgan Graves, the elder brother of a worthy clergyman near Bath, with whom I was acquainted, waited upon a lady in this neighbourhood, who at parting presented him the branch. He shewed it me, and wished much to return the compliment in verse. I applied to Johnson, who was with me ; and in about half an hour he dictated the verses, which I sent to my friend. I most solemnly declare, at that time, Johnson was an entire stranger to the Porter family ; and it was almost two years after that I introduced him to the acquaintance of Porter, whom I bought my clothes of. If you intend to convince this obstinate woman, and to exhibit to the public the truth of your narrative, you are at liberty to make what use you please of this statement. I hope you will pardon me for taking up so much of your time. Wishing you *multos et felices annos*, I shall subscribe myself Your obliged humble servant, E. Hector. *Birmingham*, Jan. 9th, 1794." B.

surprise and ridicule. Mrs. Porter was so much engaged by his conversation that she overlooked all these external disadvantages, and said to her daughter, "This is the most sensible man that I ever saw in my life."

Though Mrs. Porter was double the age of Johnson,[1] and her person and manner, as described to me by the late Mr. Garrick, were by no means pleasing to others, she must have had a superiority of understanding and talents,[2] as she certainly inspired him with a more than ordinary passion; and she having signified her willingness to accept of his hand, he went to Lichfield to ask his mother's consent to the marriage, which he could not but be conscious was a very imprudent scheme, both on account of their dis-

[1] She was really in her forty-eighth, and Johnson in his twenty-fifth, year at the time of the marriage. Her maiden name was Jervis, a family at one time of some position and property in Leicestershire.

[2] The following account of Mrs. Johnson, and her family (written by Lady Knight, and transmitted by her to Hoole, the translator of Tasso) was published in the *European Magazine* for October, 1799: "Mrs. Williams's account of Mrs. Johnson was, that she had a good understanding, and great sensibility, but inclined to be satirical. Her first husband died insolvent; her sons were much disgusted with her for her second marriage, perhaps because they, being struggling to get advanced in life, were mortified to think she had allied herself to a man who had not any visible means of being useful to them; however, she always retained her affection for them. While they [Dr. and Mrs. Johnson] resided in Gough Square, her son, the officer, knocked at the door, and asked the maid, if her mistress was at home. She answered, 'Yes, Sir; but she is sick in bed.'—'O,' says he, 'if it's so, tell her that her son Jervis, called to know how she did;' and was going away. The maid begged she might run up to tell her mistress, and without attending his answer, left him. Mrs. Johnson, enraptured to hear that her son was below, desired the maid to tell him she longed to embrace him. When the maid descended, the gentleman was gone, and poor Mrs. Johnson was much agitated by the adventure; it was the only time he ever made an effort to see her. Dr. Johnson did all he could to console his wife, but told Mrs. Williams, 'Her son is uniformly undutiful; so I conclude, like many other sober men, he might once in his life be drunk, and in that fit nature got the better of his pride.'"

parity of years, and her want of fortune.[1] But Mrs. Johnson knew too well the ardour of her son's temper, and was too tender a parent to oppose his inclinations.

I know not for what reason the marriage ceremony was not performed at Birmingham; but a resolution was taken that it should be at Derby, for which place the bride and bridegroom set out on horseback, I suppose in very good humour. But though Mr. Topham Beauclerk used archly to mention Johnson's having told him, with much gravity, "Sir, it was a love marriage on both sides," I have had from my illustrious friend the following curious account of their journey to church upon the nuptial morn (9th July) :—"Sir, she had read the old romances, and had got into her head the fantastical notion that a woman of spirit should use her lover like a dog. So, Sir, at first she told me that I rode too fast, and she could not keep up with me; and, when I rode a little slower she passed me, and complained that I lagged behind. I was not to be made the slave of caprice; and I resolved to begin as I meant to end. I therefore pushed on briskly, till I was fairly out of her sight. The road lay between two hedges, so I was sure she could not miss it; and I contrived that she should soon come up with me. When she did, I observed her to be in tears."

This, it must be allowed, was a singular beginning of connubial felicity; but there is no doubt that Johnson, though he thus shewed a manly firmness, proved a most affectionate and indulgent husband to the last moment of Mrs. Johnson's life: and in his "Prayers and Meditations," we find very remarkable evidence that his regard and fondness for her never ceased, even after her death.

He now set up a private academy, for which purpose he hired a large house, well situated, near his native city. In the Gentleman's Magazine for 1736, there is the following advertisement; "At Edial, near Lichfield, in Staffordshire, young gentlemen are boarded and taught

[1] She appears however to have at least brought more fortune than Johnson to the marriage. The school at Edial was hired and fitted up with her money.

the Latin and Greek languages, by SAMUEL JOHNSON." But the only pupils who were put under his care were the celebrated David Garrick and his brother George, and a Mr. Offely, a young gentleman of good fortune, who died early. As yet, his name had nothing of that celebrity which afterward commanded the highest attention and respect of mankind. Had such an advertisement appeared after the publication of his London, or his Rambler, or his Dictionary, how would it have burst upon the world! with what eagerness would the great and the wealthy have embraced an opportunity of putting their sons under the learned tuition of SAMUEL JOHNSON! The truth, however, is, that he was not so well qualified for being a teacher of elements, and a conductor in learning by regular gradations, as men of inferior powers of mind. His own acquisitions had been made by fits and starts, by violent irruptions in the regions of knowledge; and it could not be expected that his impatience would be subdued, and his impetuosity restrained, so as to fit him for a quiet guide to novices. The art of communicating instruction, of whatever kind, is much to be valued; and I have ever thought that those who devote themselves to this employment, and do their duty with diligence and success, are entitled to very high respect from the community, as Johnson himself often maintained. Yet I am of opinion, that the greatest abilities are not only not required for this office, but render a man less fit for it.

While we acknowledge the justness of Thomson's beautiful remark,[1]

> "Delightful task! to rear the tender thought,
> To teach the young idea how to shoot!"

we must consider that this delight is perceptible only by "a mind at ease," a mind at once calm and clear; but that a mind gloomy and impetuous, like that of Johnson,

1 *The Seasons*, "Spring," 1149. Thomson was writing not of the drudgery of a schoolmaster, but of the first education of a child by its parents.

cannot be fixed for any length of time in minute attention, and must be so frequently irritated by unavoidable slowness and error in the advances of scholars, as to perform the duty, with little pleasure to the teacher, and no great advantage to the pupils. Good temper is a most essential requisite in a preceptor. Horace paints the character as *bland:*

> "——Ut pueris olim dant crustula *blandi*
> Doctores, elementa velint ut discere prima."
> *Sat.* l. 1. 1. 25.

Johnson was not more satisfied with his situation as the master of an academy, than with that of the usher of a school; we need not wonder, therefore, that he did not keep his academy above a year and a half. From Mr. Garrick's account he did not appear to have been profoundly reverenced by his pupils. His oddities of manner, and uncouth gesticulations, could not but be the subject of merriment to them; and in particular, the young rogues used to listen at the door of his bed-chamber, and peep through the key-hole, that they might turn into ridicule his tumultuous and awkward fondness for Mrs. Johnson, whom he used to name by the familiar appellation of *Tetty* or *Tetsey;* which, like *Betty* or *Betsey*, is provincially used as a contraction for *Elizabeth*, her Christian name, but which to us seems ludicrous, when applied to a woman of her age and appearance. Mr. Garrick described her to me as very fat, with a bosom of more than ordinary protuberance, with swelled cheeks, of a florid red, produced by thick painting, and increased by the liberal use of cordials; flaring and fantastic in her dress, and affected both in her speech and her general behaviour. I have seen Garrick exhibit her, by his exquisite talent of mimicry, so as to excite the heartiest bursts of laughter; but he, probably, as is the case in all such representations, considerably aggravated the picture.[1]

[1] He certainly did, if Mrs. Piozzi is to be believed, as that lady tells us in her *Anecdotes* that she saw a picture of Mrs. Johnson at Lichfield which made her out a pretty woman, and was assured

That Johnson well knew the most proper course to be pursued in the instruction of youth, is authentically ascertained by the following paper in his own handwriting, given about this period to a relation, and now in the possession of Mr. John Nichols:

"SCHEME *for the* CLASSES *of a* GRAMMAR SCHOOL.

"WHEN the introduction, or formation of nouns and verbs, is perfectly mastered, let them learn Corderius, by Mr. Clarke; beginning at the same time to translate out of the introduction, that by this means they may learn the syntax. Then let them proceed to Erasmus, with an English translation, by the same author.

"Class II. Learns Eutropius and Cornelius Nepos, or Justin, with the translation.

"N.B. The first class gets for their part every morning the rules which they have learned before, and in the afternoon learns the Latin rules of the nouns and verbs.

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by Miss Porter that it was a good likeness. Garrick stood in considerable awe of Johnson to his face, and used to console himself by making fun of him and his wife behind his back. Bishop Percy, who has warned us not to take Garrick's descriptions too seriously, says that Johnson was by no means so repulsive as has been commonly supposed, that his countenance when in a good humour was not disagreeable, and that "many ladies have thought his features might not be unattractive when he was young." On the other hand Dr. Thomas Campbell has left a very unflattering portrait of the great man in his *Diary of a Visit to England in* 1775: "He has the aspect of an idiot, without the faintest ray of sense gleaming from any one feature—with the most awkward garb and unpowdered grey wig, on one side only of his head—he is for ever dancing the devil's jig, and sometimes he makes the most drivelling effort to whistle some thought in his absent paroxysms. . . . His awkwardness at table is just what Chesterfield described, and his roughness of manners kept pace with that." Campbell was an Irish clergyman, of some repute in his day as a writer, who met Johnson several times at the Thrales' and elsewhere as will be seen in the course of this book. His Diary was first published at Sydney in New South Wales in 1854. For the curious manner of its discovery in that colony, and for further particulars of its writer, see Mr. Napier's second volume, appendix v., and his *Johnsoniana* for the Diary itself.

"They are examined in the rules which they have learned, every Thursday and Saturday.

"The second class does the same whilst they are in Eutropius; afterward their part is in the irregular nouns and verbs, and in the rules for making and scanning verses. They are examined as the first.

"Class III. Ovid's Metamorphoses in the morning, and Cæsar's Commentaries in the afternoon.

"Practise in the Latin rules till they are perfect in them; afterward in Mr. Leed's Greek Grammar. Examined as before.

"Afterward they proceed to Virgil, beginning at the same time to write themes and verses, and to learn Greek: from thence passing on to Horace, &c. as shall seem most proper.

"I know not well what books to direct you to, because you have not informed me what study you will apply yourself to. I believe it will be most for your advantage to apply yourself wholly to the languages, till you go to the University. The Greek authors I think it best for you to read are these:

"Cebes.	
"Ælian.	Attic.
"Lucian by Leeds.	Attic.
"Xenophon.	Attic.
"Homer.	Ionic.
"Theocritus.	Doric.
"Euripides.	Attic and Doric.

"Thus you will be tolerably skilled in all the dialects, beginning with the Attic, to which the rest must be referred.

"In the study of Latin, it is proper not to read the latter authors, till you are well versed in those of the purest ages; as Terence, Tully, Cæsar, Sallust, Nepos, Velleius Paterculus, Virgil, Horace, Phædrus.

"The greatest and most necessary task still remains, to attain a habit of expression, without which knowledge is of little use. This is necessary in Latin, and more necessary in English; and can only be acquired by a daily imitation of the best and correctest authors.[1]

"Sam. Johnson."

While Johnson kept his academy, there can be no doubt that he was insensibly furnishing his mind with various

[1] Croker has pointed out that this paper contains two schemes, one for a school, the other for the individual studies of some young friends. It is obvious from Boswell's admiration for this paper that he did not know "the most proper course to be pursued in the instruction of youth."

knowledge; but I have not discovered that he wrote any thing, except a great part of his tragedy of Irene. Mr. Peter Garrick, the elder brother of David, told me that he remembered Johnson borrowing the Turkish History[1] of him, in order to form his play from it. When he had finished some part of it, he read what he had done to Mr. Walmsley, who objected to his having already brought his heroine into great distress, and asked him, "How can you possibly contrive to plunge her into deeper calamity?" Johnson, in sly allusion to the supposed oppressive proceedings of the court of which Mr. Walmsley was registrar, replied, "Sir, I can put her into the Spiritual Court!"

Mr. Walmsley, however, was well pleased with this proof of Johnson's abilities as a dramatic writer, and advised him to finish the tragedy, and produce it on the stage.

Johnson now thought of trying his fortune in London, the great field of genius and exertion, where talents of every kind have the fullest scope and the highest encouragement. It is a memorable circumstance that his pupil David Garrick went thither at the same time,[2] with

[1] Knolles' *History of the Turks.* See *The Rambler* (122). "Old Knolles," said Byron at Missolonghi a few weeks before his death, "was one of the first books that gave me pleasure when a child; and I believe it had much influence on my future wishes to visit the Levant, and gave perhaps the oriental colouring which is observed in my poetry." Byron's *Life and Works*, ix. 141, Ed. 1832.

[2] Both of them used to talk pleasantly of this their first journey to London. Garrick, evidently meaning to embellish a little, said one day in my hearing, "We rode and tied." And the Bishop of Killaloe, [Dr. Barnard,] informed me, that at another time, when Johnson and Garrick were dining together in a pretty large company, Johnson humorously ascertaining the chronology of something, expressed himself thus: "That was the year when I came to London with twopence halfpenny in my pocket." Garrick overhearing him, exclaimed, "Eh? what do you say? with twopence halfpenny in your pocket?"—JOHNSON. "Why, yes; when I came with twopence halfpenny in *my* pocket, and thou, Davy, with three halfpence in thine." B.

intent to complete his education, and follow the profession of the law, from which he was soon diverted by his decided preference for the stage.

This joint expedition of those two eminent men to the metropolis, was many years afterward noticed in an allegorical poem on Shakespeare's Mulberry tree, by Mr. Lovibond, the ingenious author of "The Tears of Old-May-Day."

They were recommended to Mr. Colson,[1] an eminent mathematician and master of an academy, by the following letter from Mr. Walmsley:

"*To the Reverend Mr.* COLSON.

"Lichfield, March 2, 1737.

"DEAR SIR,

"I HAD the favour of yours, and am extremely obliged to you; but I cannot say I had a greater affection for you upon it than I had before, being long since so much endeared to you, as well by an early friendship, as by your many excellent and valuable qualifications; and, had I had a son of my own, it would be my ambition, instead of sending him to the University, to dispose of him as this young gentleman is.

"He, and another neighbour of mine, one Mr. Samuel Johnson, set out this morning for London together. Davy Garrick is to be with you early the next week, and Mr. Johnson to try his fate with a tragedy, and to see to get himself employed in some translation, either from the Latin or the French. Johnson is a very good scholar and poet, and I have great hopes will turn out a fine tragedy-writer. If it should any way lie in your way, I doubt not but you would be ready to recommend and assist your countryman.

"G. WALMSLEY."

How he employed himself upon his first coming to London is not particularly known.[2] I never heard that

[1] The Rev. John Colson was first master of the Free School at Rochester, and afterwards Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge.

[2] One curious anecdote was communicated by himself to Mr. John Nichols. Mr. Wilcox, the bookseller, on being informed by him that his intention was to get his livelihood as an author,

he found any protection or encouragement by the means of Mr. Colson, to whose academy David Garrick went. Mrs. Lucy Porter told me, that Mr. Walmsley gave him a letter of introduction to Lintot his bookseller, and that Johnson wrote some things for him; but I imagine this to be a mistake, for I have discovered no trace of it, and I am pretty sure he told me, that Mr. Cave was the first publisher by whom his pen was engaged in London.

He had a little money when he came to town, and he knew how he could live in the cheapest manner. His first lodgings were at the house of Mr. Norris, a stay-maker, in Exeter-street, adjoining Catherine-street, in the Strand. "I dined," said he, "very well for eightpence, with very good company, at the Pine-Apple in New-street, just by. Several of them had travelled. They expected to meet every day; but did not know one another's names. It used to cost the rest a shilling, for they drank wine; but I had a cut of meat for sixpence, and bread for a penny, and gave the waiter a penny; so that I was quite well served, nay, better than the rest, for they gave the waiter nothing."[1]

He at this time, I believe, abstained entirely from fermented liquors: a practice to which he rigidly conformed for many years together, at different periods of his life.

His Ofellus, in the *Art of Living in London*, I have heard him relate, was an Irish painter, whom he knew at Birmingham, and who had practised his own precepts of economy for several years in the British capital. He assured Johnson, who, I suppose, was then meditating to try his fortune in London, but was apprehensive of the expense, "That thirty pounds a year was enough to enable a man to live there, without being contemptible. He

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eyed his robust frame attentively, and with a significant look, said, "You had better buy a porter's knot." He however added, "Wilcox was one of my best friends." B.

[1] Cumberland says, in his Memoirs (i. 355), that he had heard Johnson declare that for a considerable time he lived on fourpence halfpenny a day.

allowed ten pounds for clothes and linen. He said a man might live in a garret at eighteen-pence a week; few people would inquire where he lodged; and if they did, it was easy to say, 'Sir, I am to be found at such a place.' By spending threepence in a coffee-house, he might be for some hours every day in very good company; he might dine for sixpence, breakfast on bread and milk for a penny, and do without supper. On *clean-shirt-day* he went abroad, and paid visits." I have heard him more than once talk of his frugal friend, whom he recollected with esteem and kindness, and did not like to have one smile at the recital. "This man," said he, gravely, "was a very sensible man, who perfectly understood common affairs: a man of a great deal of knowledge of the world, fresh from life, not strained through books. He borrowed a horse and ten pounds at Birmingham. Finding himself master of so much money, he set off for West Chester, in order to get to Ireland. He returned the horse, and probably the ten pounds too, after he got home."

Considering Johnson's narrow circumstances in the early part of his life, and particularly at the interesting era of his launching into the ocean of London, it is not to be wondered at, that an actual instance, proved by experience, of the possibility of enjoying the intellectual luxury of social life upon a very small income, should deeply engage his attention, and be ever recollected by him as a circumstance of much importance. He amused himself, I remember, by computing how much more expense was absolutely necessary to live upon the same scale with that which his friend described, when the value of money was diminished by the progress of commerce. It may be estimated that double the money might now with difficulty be sufficient.

Amidst this cold obscurity, there was one brilliant circumstance to cheer him; he was well acquainted with Mr. Henry Hervey,[1] one of the branches of the noble family

[1] The Honourable Henry Hervey, third son of the first Earl of Bristol, quitted the army, and took orders. He married a sister

of that name, who had been quartered at Lichfield as an officer of the army, and had at this time a house in London, where Johnson was frequently entertained, and had an opportunity of meeting genteel company. Not very long before his death, he mentioned this, among other particulars of his life, which he was kindly communicating to me; and he described this early friend, "Harry Hervey," thus: "He was a vicious man, but very kind to me. If you call a dog HERVEY, I shall love him."

He told me he had now written only three acts of his Irene, and that he retired for some time to lodgings at Greenwich, where he proceeded in it somewhat farther, and used to compose, walking in the Park; but did not stay long enough at that place to finish it.

At this period we find the following letter from him to Mr. Edward Cave, which, as a link in the chain of his literary history, it is proper to insert:

"TO MR. CAVE.

"Greenwich, next door to the Golden Heart, Church-street, July 12, 1737.

"SIR,

"HAVING observed in your papers very uncommon offers of encouragement to men of letters, I have chosen, being a stranger in London, to communicate to you the following design, which, I hope, if you join in it, will be of advantage to both of us.

"The History of the Council of Trent having been lately translated into French, and published with large Notes by Dr. Le Courayer, the reputation of that book is so much revived in England, that, it is presumed, a new translation of it from the Italian, together with Le Courayer's Notes from the French, could not fail of a favourable reception.

"If it be answered, that the History is already in English, it must be remembered, that there was the same objection against Le Courayer's undertaking, with this disadvantage, that the French had a version by one of their best translators, whereas you cannot

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of Sir Thomas Aston, by whom he got the Aston estate, and assumed the name and arms of that family. *Vide* Collins's Peerage. B. Hervey's eldest brother was Pope's Lord Fanny.

read three pages of the English History without discovering that the style is capable of great improvements; but whether those improvements are to be expected from the attempt, you must judge from the specimen, which, if you approve the proposal, I shall submit to your examination.

"Suppose the merit of the versions equal, we may hope that the addition of the Notes will turn the balance in our favour, considering the reputation of the Annotator.

"Be pleased to favour me with a speedy answer, if you are not willing to engage in this scheme; and appoint me a day to wait upon you, if you are.

"I am, Sir, your humble servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

It should seem from this letter, though subscribed with his own name, that he had not yet been introduced to Mr. Cave. We shall presently see what was done in consequence of the proposal which it contains.

In the course of the summer he returned to Lichfield, where he had left Mrs. Johnson, and there he at last finished his tragedy, which was not executed with his rapidity of composition upon other occasions, but was slowly and painfully elaborated. A few days before his death, while burning a great mass of papers, he picked out from among them the original unformed sketch of this tragedy, in his own hand-writing, and gave it to Mr. Langton, by whose favour a copy of it is now in my possession. It contains fragments of the intended plot, and speeches for the different persons of the drama, partly in the raw materials of prose, partly worked up into verse; as also a variety of hints for illustration, borrowed from the Greek, Roman, and modern writers. The hand-writing is very difficult to be read, even by those who are best acquainted with Johnson's mode of penmanship, which at all times was very particular. The King having graciously accepted of this manuscript as a literary curiosity, Mr. Langton made a fair and distinct copy of it, which he ordered to be bound up with the original and the printed tragedy; and the volume is deposited in the King's library. His Majesty was pleased to permit Mr. Langton to take a copy of it for himself.

The whole of it is rich in thought and imagery, and happy expressions; and of the *disjecta membra* scattered throughout, and as yet unarranged, a good dramatic poet might avail himself with considerable advantage. I shall give my readers some specimens of different kinds, distinguishing them by the italic character.

"*Nor think to say here will I stop,*
Here will I fix the limits of transgression,
Nor farther tempt the avenging rage of heaven.
When guilt like this once harbours in the breast,
Those holy beings, whose unseen direction
Guides through the maze of life the steps of man,
Fly the detested mansions of impiety,
And quit their charge to horror and to ruin."

A small part only of this interesting admonition is preserved in the play, and is varied, I think, not to advantage:

"The soul once tainted with so foul a crime,
No more shall glow with friendship's hallow'd ardour:
Those holy beings, whose superior care
Guides erring mortals to the paths of virtue,
Affrighted at impiety like thine,
Resign their charge to baseness and to ruin."

"*I feel the soft infection*
Flush in my cheek, and wander in my veins.
Teach me the Grecian art of soft persuasion."

"*Sure this is love, which heretofore I conceived the dream of idle maids, and wanton poets.*"

"*Though no comets or prodigies foretold the ruin of Greece, signs which heaven must by another miracle enable us to understand, yet might it be foreshewn, by tokens no less certain, by the vices which always bring it on.*"

This last passage is worked up in the tragedy itself, as follows:

LEONTIUS. "——That power that kindly spreads
The clouds, a signal of impending showers,
To warn the wand'ring linnet to the shade,

Beheld, without concern, expiring Greece,
And not one prodigy foretold our fate.

DEMETRIUS. A thousand horrid prodigies foretold it;
A feeble government, eluded laws,
A factious populace, luxurious nobles,
And all the maladies of sinking states.
When public villainy, too strong for justice,
Shows his bold front, the harbinger of ruin,
Can brave Leontius call for airy wonders,
Which cheats interpret, and which fools regard?
When some neglected fabric nods beneath
The weight of years, and totters to the tempest,
Must heaven despatch the messengers of light,
Or wake the dead, to warn us of its fall?"

MAHOMET (to IRENE). "*I have tried thee, and joy to find that thou deservest to be loved by Mahomet,—with a mind great as his own. Sure, thou art an error of nature, and an exception to the rest of thy sex, and art immortal; for sentiments like thine were never to sink into nothing. I thought all the thoughts of the fair had been to select the graces of the day, dispose the colours of the flaunting (flowing) robe, tune the voice and roll the eye, place the gem, choose the dress, and add new roses to the fading cheek, but—sparkling.*"

Thus in the tragedy:

"Illustrious maid, new wonders fix me thine;
Thy soul completes the triumphs of thy face;
I thought, forgive, my fair, the noblest aim,
The strongest effort of a female soul
Was but to choose the graces of the day,
To tune the tongue, to teach the eyes to roll,
Dispose the colours of the flowing robe,
And add new roses to the faded cheek."

I shall select one other passage, on account of the doctrine which it illustrates. IRENE observes, "*That the Supreme Being will accept of virtue, whatever outward circumstances it may be accompanied with, and may be delighted with varieties of worship;* but is answered: *That variety cannot affect that Being, who, infinitely happy in his own perfections, wants no external gratifications; nor can infinite*

truth be delighted with falsehood; that though he may guide or pity those he leaves in darkness, he abandons those who shut their eyes against the beams of day."

Johnson's residence at Lichfield, on his return to it at this time, was only for three months; and as he had as yet seen but a small part of the wonders of the metropolis, he had little to tell his townsmen. He related to me the following minute anecdote of this period: "In the last age, when my mother lived in London, there were two sets of people, those who gave the wall, and those who took it; the peaceable and the quarrelsome. When I returned to Lichfield, after having been in London, my mother asked me, whether I was one of those who gave the wall, or those who took it. *Now* it is fixed that every man keeps to the right; or, if one is taking the wall, another yields it; and it is never a dispute."[1]

He now removed to London with Mrs. Johnson; but her daughter, who had lived with them at Edial, was left with her relations in the country. His lodgings were for some time in Woodstock-street, near Hanover-square, and afterward in Castle-street, near Cavendish-square. As there is something pleasingly interesting, to many, in tracing so great a man through all his different habitations, I shall, before this work is concluded, present my readers with an exact list of his lodgings and houses, in order of time, which, in placid condescension to my respectful curiosity, he one evening dictated to me, but without specifying how long he lived at each. In the progress of his life I shall have occasion to mention some of them as connected with particular incidents, or with the writing of particular parts of his works. To some, this minute attention may appear trifling; but when we consider the punctilious exactness with which the different houses in which Milton resided have been traced by the writers of his life, a similar enthusiasm may be pardoned in the biographer of Johnson.

His tragedy being by this time, as he thought, completely finished and fit for the stage, he was very desirous

[1] *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, 3rd edit. p. 232. B.

that it should be brought forward. Mr. Peter Garrick told me, that Johnson and he went together to the Fountain tavern, and read it over, and that he afterward solicited Mr. Fleetwood, the patentee of Drury-lane theatre, to have it acted at his house; but Mr. Fleetwood would not accept it, probably because it was not patronized by some man of high rank; and it was not acted till 1749, when his friend David Garrick was manager of that theatre.

The "Gentleman's Magazine," begun and carried on by Mr. Edward Cave, under the name of "Sylvanus Urban," had attracted the notice and esteem of Johnson, in an eminent degree, before he came to London, as an adventurer in literature. He told me, that when he first saw St. John's Gate, the place where that deservedly popular miscellany was originally printed, he "beheld it with reverence." I suppose, indeed, that every young author has had the same kind of feeling for the magazine or periodical publication which has first entertained him, and in which he has first had an opportunity to see himself in print, without the risk of exposing his name. I myself recollect such impressions from "The Scots Magazine," which was begun at Edinburgh in the year 1739, and has been ever conducted with judgment, accuracy, and propriety. I yet cannot help thinking of it with an affectionate regard. Johnson has dignified the "Gentleman's Magazine," by the importance with which he invests the life of Cave; but he has given it still greater lustre by the various admirable Essays which he wrote for it.

Though Johnson was often solicited by his friends to make a complete list of his writings, and talked of doing it, I believe with a serious intention that they should all be collected on his own account, he put it off from year to year, and at last died without having done it perfectly. I have one in his own hand-writing which contains a certain number; I indeed doubt if he could have remembered every one of them, as they were so numerous, so various, and scattered in such a multiplicity of unconnected publications; nay, several of them published under the names of other persons, to whom he liberally contributed from

the abundance of his mind. We must, therefore, be content to discover them, partly from occasional information given by him to his friends, and partly from internal evidence.[1]

His first performance in the "Gentleman's Magazine," which for many years was his principal source for employment and support, was a copy of Latin verses, in March, 1738, addressed to the editor in so happy a style of compliment, that Cave must have been destitute both of taste and sensibility, had he not felt himself highly gratified.

Ad URBANUM.*

URBANE, nullis fesse laboribus,
URBANE, nullis victe calumniis,
Cui fronte sertum in erudita
Perpetuo viret et virebit;

Quid moliatur gens imitantium,
Quid et minetur, solicitus parum,
Vacare solis perge Musis,
Juxta animo studiisque felix.

Linguæ procacis plumbea spicula,
Fidens, superbo frange silentio;
Victrix per obstantes catervas
Sedulitas animosa tendet.

Intende nervos, fortis, inanibus
Risurus olim nisibus æmuli;
Intende jam nervos, habebis
Participes operæ Camœnas.

Non ulla Musis pagina gratior,
Quam quæ severis ludicra jungere
Novit, fatigatamque nugis
Utilibus recreare mentem.

[1] While in the course of my narrative I enumerate his writings, I shall take care that my readers shall not be left to waver in doubt, between certainty and conjecture, with regard to their authenticity; and, for that purpose, shall mark with an *asterisk* (*) those which he acknowledged to his friends, and with a *dagger* (†) those which are ascertained to be his by internal evidence. When any other pieces are ascribed to him, I shall give my reasons. B.

Texente Nymphis serta Lycoride,
Rosæ ruborem sic viola adjuvat
Immista, sic Iris refulget
Æthereis variata fucis.[1] S. J.

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[1] A translation of this Ode, by an unknown correspondent, appeared in the Magazine for the month of May following:

"Hail URBAN! indefatigable man
Unwearied yet by all thy useful toil!
Whom num'rous slanderers assault in vain;
Whom no base calumny can put to foil.
But still the laurel on thy learned brow
Flourishes fair, and shall for ever grow.

What mean the servile imitating crew,
What their vain blust'ring and their empty noise,
Ne'er seek: but still thy noble ends pursue,
Unconquer'd by the rabble's venal voice.
Still to the Muse thy studious mind apply,
Happy in temper as in industry.

The senseless sneerings of a haughty tongue,
Unworthy thy attention to engage,
Unheeded pass: and though they mean thee wrong,
By manly silence disappoint their rage.
Assiduous diligence confounds its foes,
Resistless, though malicious crowds oppose.

Exert thy powers, nor slacken in the course,
Thy spotless fame shall quash all false reports:
Exert thy powers, nor fear a rival's force,
But thou shalt smile at all his vain efforts;
Thy labours shall be crown'd with large success:
The Muses' aid thy Magazine shall bless.

No page more grateful to th' harmonious Nine
Than that wherein thy labours we survey;
Where solemn themes in fuller splendour shine,
(Delightful mixture,) blended with the gay,
Where in improving, various joys we find,
A welcome respite to the wearied mind.

Thus when the nymphs in some fair verdant mead,
Of various flow'rs a beauteous wreath compose,
The lovely violet's azure-painted head
Adds lustre to the crimson-blushing rose,
Thus splendid Iris, with her varied dye,
Shines in the æther, and adorns the sky.—BRITON." B.

It appears that he was now enlisted by Mr. Cave, as a regular coadjutor in his magazine, by which he probably obtained a tolerable livelihood. At what time or by what means, he had acquired a competent knowledge both of French and Italian, I do not know; but he was so well skilled in them, as to be sufficiently qualified for a translator. That part of his labour which consisted in emendation and improvement of the productions of other contributors, like that employed in levelling ground, can be perceived only by those who had an opportunity of comparing the original with the altered copy. What we certainly know to have been done by him in this way, was the Debates in both Houses of Parliament, under the name of "The Senate of Lilliput," sometimes with feigned denominations of the several speakers, sometimes with denominations formed of the letters of their real names, in the manner of what is called anagram, so that they might easily be deciphered. Parliament then kept the press in a kind of mysterious awe, which made it necessary to have recourse to such devices. In our time it has acquired an unrestrained freedom, so that the people in all parts of the kingdom have a fair, open, and exact report of the actual proceedings of their representatives and legislators, which in our constitution is highly to be valued; though, unquestionably, there has of late been too much reason to complain of the petulance with which obscure scribblers have presumed to treat men of the most respectable character and situation.

This important article of the "Gentleman's Magazine" was, for several years, executed by Mr. William Guthrie, a man who deserves to be respectably recorded in the literary annals of this country. He was descended of an ancient family in Scotland; but having a small patrimony, and being an adherent of the unfortunate House of Stuart, he could not accept of any office in the state; he therefore came to London, and employed his talents and learning as an "Author by profession." His writings in history, criticism, and politics, had considerable merit.[1]

[1] How much poetry he wrote, I know not: but he informed

He was the first English historian who had recourse to that authentic source of information, the Parliamentary Journals; and such was the power of his political pen, that, at an early period, government thought it worth their while to keep it quiet by a pension, which he enjoyed till his death. Johnson esteemed him enough to wish that his life should be written. The debates in Parliament, which were brought home and digested by Guthrie, whose memory, though surpassed by others who have since followed him in the same department, was yet very quick and tenacious, were sent by Cave to Johnson for his revision; and after some time, when Guthrie had attained to greater variety of employment, and the speeches were more and more enriched by the accession of Johnson's genius, it was resolved that he should do the whole himself, from the scanty notes furnished by persons employed to attend in both Houses of Parliament. Sometimes, however, as he himself told me, he had nothing more communicated to him than the names of the several speakers, and the part which they had taken in the debate.

Thus was Johnson employed during some of the best years of his life, as a mere literary labourer "for gain not glory," solely to obtain an honest support. He, however, indulged himself in occasional little sallies, which the French so happily express by the term *jeux d'esprit*, and which will be noticed in their order, in the progress of this work.

But what first displayed his transcendent powers, and "gave the world assurance of the MAN," was his "London, a poem in Imitation of the Third Satire of Juvenal"; which came out in May this year, and burst forth with

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me that he was the author of the beautiful little piece, "The Eagle and Robin Redbreast," in the collection of poems entitled, *The Union*, though it is there said to be written by Archibald Scott, before the year 1600. B. Peter Cunningham told Croker that he had seen a letter of Jos. Warton's declaring the poem to have been written by his brother Tom who edited the volume. For many years Guthrie received a regular pension from the ministry of £200: see D'Israeli's *Calamities and Quarrels of Authors*, i. 5.

splendour, the rays of which will for ever encircle his name. Boileau had imitated the same satire with great success, applying it to Paris; but an attentive comparison will satisfy every reader, that he is much excelled by the English Juvenal. Oldham[1] had also imitated it, and applied it to London: all which performances concur to prove, that great cities in every age, and in every country, will furnish similar topics of satire. Whether Johnson had previously read Oldham's imitation, I do not know; but it is not a little remarkable, that there is scarcely any coincidence found between the two performances, though upon the very same subject. The only instances are, in describing London as the *sink* of foreign worthlessness:

"————the *common shore*,
Where France does all her filth and ordure pour."
OLDHAM.

"The *common shore* of Paris and of Rome."—JOHNSON.

and,

"No calling or profession comes amiss,
A *needy monsieur* can be what he please."—OLDHAM.

"All sciences a *fasting monsieur* knows."—JOHNSON.

The particulars which Oldham has collected, both as exhibiting the horrors of London, and of the times, contrasted with better days, are different from those of Johnson, and in general well chosen and well exprest.[2]

There are in Oldham's imitation, many prosaic verses

[1] John Oldham (1653—1683), known as the English Juvenal for his satires against the Jesuits.

[2] I own it pleased me to find amongst them one trait of the manners of the age in London, in the last century, to shield from the sneer of English ridicule, what was some time ago too common a practice in my native city of Edinburgh!

"If what I've said can't from the town affright,
Consider other *dangers of the night;*
When brickbats are from upper stories thrown,
And *emptied chamberpots come pouring down*
From garret windows." B.

and bad rhymes, and his poem sets out with a strange inadvertent blunder :

> "Tho' much concern'd to *leave* my dear old friend,
> I must, however, *his* design commend
> Of fixing in the country——."

It is plain he was not going to leave his *friend;* his friend was going to leave *him.* A young lady at once corrected this with good critical sagacity, to

> "Though much concern'd to *lose* my dear old friend."

There is one passage in the original, better transfused by Oldham than by Johnson :

> "Nil habet infelix paupertas durius in se,
> Quam quod ridiculos homines facit."—*v.* 152.

which is an exquisite remark on the galling meanness and contempt annexed to poverty : JOHNSON's imitation is :

> "Of all the griefs that harass the distrest,
> Sure the most bitter is a scornful jest."

OLDHAM's, though less elegant, is more just :

> "Nothing in poverty so ill is borne,
> As its exposing men to grinning scorn."

Where, or in what manner, this poem was composed, I am sorry that I neglected to ascertain with precision, from Johnson's own authority. He has marked upon his corrected copy of the first edition of it, "Written in 1738 ;" and, as it was published in the month of May in that year, it is evident that much time was not employed in preparing it for the press. The history of its publication I am enabled to give in a very satisfactory manner ; and judging from myself, and many of my friends, I trust that it will not be uninteresting to my readers.

We may be certain, though it is not expressly named in the following letters to Mr. Cave, in 1738, that they all relate to it :

"TO MR. CAVE.

"Castle-street, Wednesday morning.
[*No date.* 1738.]

"SIR,

"WHEN I took the liberty of writing to you a few days ago, I did not expect a repetition of the same pleasure so soon; for a pleasure I shall always think it, to converse in any manner with an ingenious and candid man; but having the inclosed poem in my hands to dispose of for the benefit of the author, (of whose abilities I shall say nothing, since I send you his performance,) I believed I could not procure more advantageous terms from any person than from you, who have so much distinguished yourself by your generous encouragement of poetry; and whose judgment of that art nothing but your commendation of my trifle[1] can give me any occasion to call in question. I do not doubt but you will look over this poem with another eye, and reward it in a different manner, from a mercenary bookseller, who counts the lines he is to purchase, and considers nothing but the bulk. I cannot help taking notice, that, besides what the author may hope for on account of his abilities, he has likewise another claim to your regard, as he lies at present under very disadvantageous circumstances of fortune. I beg, therefore, that you will favour me with a letter to-morrow, that I may know what you can afford to allow him, that he may either part with it to you, or find out (which I do not expect), some other way more to his satisfaction.

"I have only to add, that as I am sensible I have transcribed it very coarsely, which, after having altered it, I was obliged to do, I will, if you please to transmit the sheets from the press, correct it for you; and take the trouble of altering any stroke of satire which you may dislike.

"By exerting on this occasion your usual generosity, you will not only encourage learning, and relieve distress, but (though it be in comparison of the other motives of very small account) oblige in a very sensible manner, Sir, your very humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"TO MR. CAVE.

"Monday, No. 6, Castle-street.

"SIR,

"I AM to return you thanks for the present you were so kind as to send by me, and to intreat that you will be pleased to

[1] His Ode *Ad Urbanum*, probably. (N.) B.

inform me by the penny-post, whether you resolve to print the poem. If you please to send it me by the post, with a note to Dodsley, I will go and read the lines to him, that we may have his consent to put his name in the title-page. As to the printing, if it can be set immediately about, I will be so much the author's friend, as not to content myself with mere solicitations in his favour. I propose, if my calculation be near the truth, to engage for the reimbursement of all that you shall lose by an impression of 500; provided, as you very generously propose, that the profit, if any, be set aside for the author's use, excepting the present you made, which, if he be a gainer, it is fit he should repay. I beg that you will let one of your servants write an exact account of the expense of such an impression, and send it with the poem, that I may know what I engage for. I am very sensible, from your generosity on this occasion, of your regard to learning, even in its unhappiest state; and cannot but think such a temper deserving of the gratitude of those who suffer so often from a contrary disposition.

"I am, Sir, your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."[1]

"TO MR. CAVE.

[*No date.*]

"SIR,

"I WAITED on you to take the copy to Dodsley's: as I remember the number of lines which it contains, it will be no longer than 'Eugenio,'[2] with the quotations, which must be subjoined at the bottom of the page; part of the beauty of the performance (if any beauty be allowed it) consisting in adapting Juvenal's sentiments to modern facts and persons. It will, with those additions, very conveniently make five sheets. And since the expense will be no more, I shall contentedly insure it, as I mentioned in my last. If it be not therefore gone to Dodsley's, I beg it may be sent me by the penny-post, that I may have it in the evening. I have composed a Greek Epigram to Eliza,[3] and

[1] Dr. Hill tells us that the original letter contains an additional paragraph,—"I beg that you will not delay your answer."

[2] A poem, published in 1737, of which see an account under April 30, 1773. B.

[3] Mrs. Elizabeth Carter (1717—1806), daughter of Dr. Nicholas Carter, was one of the most learned of her sex. She was mistress of many languages, ancient and modern, and occasionally condescended to poetry, in which she was not so well versed. Her most remarkable performance was a translation

think she ought to be celebrated in as many different languages as Lewis le Grand. Pray send me word when you will begin upon the poem, for it is a long way to walk. I would leave my Epigram, but have not day-light to transcribe it. I am, Sir,

"Yours, &c.

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"TO MR. CAVE.

[*No date.*]

"SIR,

"I AM extremely obliged by your kind letter, and will not fail to attend you to-morrow with IRENE, who looks upon you as one of her best friends.

"I was to-day with Mr. Dodsley, who declares very warmly in favour of the paper you sent him, which he desires to have a share in, it being, as he says, *a creditable thing to be concerned in.* I knew not what answer to make till I had consulted you, nor what to demand on the author's part, but am very willing that, if you please, he should have a part in it, as he will undoubtedly be more diligent to disperse and promote it. If you can send me word to-morrow what I shall say to him, I will settle matters, and bring the poem with me for the press, which, as the town empties, we cannot be too quick with. I am, Sir,

"Yours, &c.

"SAM. JOHNSON."

To us who have long known the manly force, bold spirit, and masterly versification of this poem, it is a matter of curiosity to observe the diffidence with which its author brought it forward into public notice, while he is so cautious as not to avow it to be his own production; and with what humility he offers to allow the printer to "alter any stroke of satire which he might dislike." That any such alteration was made, we do not know. If we

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of the Discourses of Epictetus, of which George Long, in the preface to his translation, has said that probably no Englishman could have bettered it at the time. Her erudition did not prevent her from being an agreeable companion and a sensible woman. Johnson (says Hawkins) hearing a lady once praised for her learning, observed: "A man is in general better pleased when he has a good dinner upon his table, than when his wife talks Greek. My old friend Mrs. Carter could make a pudding as well as translate Epictetus."

did, we could not but feel an indignant regret; but how painful is it to see that a writer of such vigorous powers of mind was actually in such distress, that the small profit which so short a poem, however excellent, could yield, was courted as a "relief."

It has been generally said, I know not with what truth, that Johnson offered his "London" to several booksellers, none of whom would purchase it. To this circumstance Mr. Derrick[1] alludes in the following lines of his "Fortune, a Rhapsody:"

> "Will no kind patron JOHNSON own?
> Shall JOHNSON friendless range the town?
> And every publisher refuse
> The offspring of his happy Muse?"

But we have seen that the worthy, modest, and ingenious Mr. Robert Dodsley had taste enough to perceive its uncommon merit, and thought it creditable to have a share in it. The fact is, that, at a future conference, he bargained for the whole property of it, for which he gave Johnson ten guineas; who told me, "I might perhaps have accepted of less; but that Paul Whitehead had a little before got ten guineas for a poem; and I would not take less than Paul Whitehead."

I may here observe, that Johnson appeared to me to undervalue Paul Whitehead upon every occasion when he was mentioned, and, in my opinion, did not do him justice; but when it is considered that Paul Whitehead was a member of a riotous and profane club,[2] we may

[1] Samuel Derrick, an Irishman (1724—69), was apprenticed to a linen-draper, which useful business he abandoned for the stage, and the stage very soon for literature. He succeeded Beau Nash as Master of the Ceremonies at Bath, where he was more in his element, but his loose and extravagant life kept him always in want.

[2] The Monks of Medmenham Abbey, a society of dissipated men of fashion who dubbed themselves Franciscans after their leader Sir Francis Dashwood. Their Rabelaisian motto, *Fay ce que vous voudras*, may still be seen over the doorway of the picturesque ruins on the banks of the Thames between Henley

account for Johnson's having a prejudice against him Paul Whitehead was, indeed, unfortunate in being not only slighted by Johnson, but violently attacked by Churchill, who utters the following imprecation :

> "May I (can worse disgrace on manhood fall?)
> Be born a Whitehead, and baptized a Paul!"

yet I shall never be persuaded to think meanly of the author of so brilliant and pointed a satire as "Manners."

Johnson's "London" was published in May, 1738;[1] and it is remarkable, that it came out on the same morning with Pope's satire, entitled "1738"; so that England had at once its Juvenal and Horace as poetical monitors. The Reverend Dr. Douglas, now Bishop of Salisbury,[2] to whom I am indebted for some obliging communications, was then a student at Oxford, and remembers well the effect which "London" produced. Everybody was delighted with it; and there being no name to it, the first

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and Marlow. Lord Sandwich and Wilkes were both members of this precious crew. See Almon's *Life of Wilkes* and Sir George Trevelyan's *Early History of Fox*.

[1] Sir John Hawkins, p. 86, tells us, "The event is *antedated*, in the poem of 'London': but in every particular, except the difference of a year, what is there said of the departure of Thales, must be understood of Savage, and looked upon as *true history*." This conjecture is, I believe, entirely groundless. I have been assured that Johnson said he was not so much as acquainted with Savage, when he wrote his *London*. If the departure mentioned in it was the departure of Savage, the event was not *antedated* but *foreseen*; for *London* was published in May, 1738, and Savage did not set out for Wales till July, 1739. However well Johnson could defend the credibility of *second sight*, he did not pretend that he himself was possessed of that faculty. B. Dr. Hill, however, gives good reasons for believing Boswell to have been mistaken.

[2] Dr. Douglas (1721—1807), the son of a Scottish merchant, was educated at Oxford, appointed chaplain to the Third regiment of Footguards, and was present with them at Fontenoy. He was afterwards tutor to Lord Bath's eldest son. He published many books, theological and others, including editions of Clarendon's *History* and Cook's *Voyages*. In 1787 he was made Bishop of Carlisle and in 1791 translated to the See of Salisbury.

buzz of the literary circles was, "Here is an unknown poet, greater even than Pope." And it is recorded in the "Gentleman's Magazine" of that year,[1] that it "got to the second edition in the course of a week."

One of the warmest patrons of this poem on its first appearance was General Oglethorpe,[2] whose "strong benevolence of soul" was unabated during the course of a very long life; though it is painful to think, that he had but too much reason to become cold and callous, and discontented with the world, from the neglect which he experienced of his public and private worth, by those in whose power it was to gratify so gallant a veteran with marks of distinction. This extraordinary person was as remarkable for his learning and taste, as for his other eminent qualities; and no man was more prompt, active, and generous, in encouraging merit. I have heard Johnson gratefully acknowledge, in his presence, the kind and effectual support which he gave to his "London," though unacquainted with its author.

Pope, who then filled the poetical throne without a

[1] Page 269. B.

[2] "One, driven by strong benevolence of soul,
Shall fly, like Oglethorpe, from pole to pole."
Pope's *Imitations of Horace*, ii. 2, 276.

James Edward Oglethorpe (1698—1785) was educated at Oxford, served under Prince Eugene against the Turks, and had a command in the rebellion of 1745, where he was considered to have been rather too lenient to the enemy. His conduct was the subject of an inquiry, and though he was acquitted, he was never afterwards employed. He sat for several Parliaments, where he acquired the reputation of a Jacobite. The quotation refers to his exertions in the reform of our prisons and the colonisation of the province of Georgia, where he spent ten years. His wisdom does not seem to have been always equal to his philanthropy. Horace Walpole (*Letters*, viii. 548) thus describes him in his eighty-seventh year: "His eyes, ears, articulation, limbs, and memory would suit a boy, if a boy could recollect a century backwards. His teeth are gone; he is a shadow and a wrinkled one; but his spirits and his spirit are in full bloom: two years and a half ago he challenged a neighbouring gentleman for trespassing on his manor."

rival, it may reasonably be presumed, must have been particularly struck by the sudden appearance of such a poet; and, to his credit, let it be remembered, that his feelings and conduct on the occasion were candid and liberal. He requested Mr. Richardson, son of the painter, to endeavour to find out who this new author was. Mr. Richardson, after some inquiry, having informed him that he had discovered only that his name was Johnson, and that he was some obscure man, Pope said, "He will soon be *déterré*."[1] We shall presently see, from a note written by Pope, that he was himself, afterward more successful in his inquiries than his friend.

That in this justly-celebrated poem may be found a few rhymes which the critical precision of English prosody at this day would disallow, cannot be denied; but with this small imperfection, which in the general blaze of its excellence is not perceived, till the mind has subsided into cool attention, it is, undoubtedly, one of the noblest productions in our language, both for sentiment and expression. The nation was then in that ferment against the Court and the Ministry, which some years after ended in the downfall of Sir Robert Walpole; and as it has been said, that Tories are Whigs when out of place, and Whigs Tories when in place; so, as a Whig Administration ruled with what force it could, a Tory Opposition had all the animation and all the eloquence of resistance to power, aided by the common topics of patriotism, liberty, and independence! Accordingly we find in Johnson's "London" the most spirited invectives against tyranny and oppression, the warmest predilection for his own country, and the purest love of virtue; interspersed with traits of his own particular character and situation, not omitting his prejudices as a "true-born Englishman,"[2] not only

[1] Sir Joshua Reynolds, from the information of the younger Richardson. B.

[2] It is, however, remarkable, that he uses the epithet, which undoubtedly, since the union between England and Scotland, ought to denominate the natives of both parts of our island:

"Was early taught a BRITON's rights to prize." B.

against foreign countries, but against Ireland and Scotland. On some of these topics I shall quote a few passages :

> "The cheated nation's happy fav'rites see ;
> Mark whom the great caress, who frown on me."

> "Has heaven reserv'd, in pity to the poor,
> No pathless waste, or undiscover'd shore ?
> No secret island in the boundless main ?
> No peaceful desert yet unclaim'd by Spain ?
> Quick let us rise, the happy seats explore,
> And bear Oppression's insolence no more."

> "How, when competitors like these contend,
> Can *surly Virtue* hope to find a friend ? "

> "This mournful truth is every where confess'd,
> SLOW RISES WORTH, BY POVERTY DEPRESS'D ! "

We may easily conceive with what feeling a great mind like his, cramped and galled by narrow circumstances, uttered this last line, which he marked by capitals. The whole of the poem is eminently excellent, and there are in it such proofs of a knowledge of the world, and of a mature acquaintance with life, as cannot be contemplated without wonder, when we consider that he was then only in his twenty-ninth year, and had yet been so little in the "busy haunts of men."

Yet, while we admire the poetical excellence of this poem, candour obliges us to allow, that the flame of patriotism and zeal for popular resistance with which it is fraught, had no just cause. There was, in truth, *no* "oppression" ; the "nation" was *not* "cheated." Sir Robert Walpole was a wise and a benevolent minister, who thought that the happiness and prosperity of a commercial country like ours would be best promoted by peace, which he accordingly maintained with credit, during a very long period. Johnson himself afterward honestly acknowledged the merit of Walpole, whom he called "a fixed star" ; while he characterised his opponent, Pitt, as "a meteor." But Johnson's juvenile poem was naturally impregnated with the fire of opposition, and upon every account was universally admired.

Though thus elevated into fame, and conscious of uncommon powers, he had not that bustling confidence, or, I may rather say, that animated ambition, which one might have supposed would have urged him to endeavour at rising in life. But such was his inflexible dignity of character, that he could not stoop to court the great; without which, hardly any man has made his way to a high station. He could not expect to produce many such works as his "London," and he felt the hardships of writing for bread; he was, therefore, willing to resume the office of a schoolmaster, so as to have a sure, though moderate, income for his life; and an offer being made to him of the mastership of a school,[1] provided he could

[1] In a billet written by Mr. Pope in the following year, this school is said to have been in *Shropshire;* but as it appears from a letter from Earl Gower, that the trustees of it were "some worthy gentlemen in Johnson's neighbourhood," I in my first edition suggested that Pope must have, by mistake, written Shropshire instead of Staffordshire. But I have since been obliged to Mr. Spearing, attorney-at-law, for the following information:— "William Adams, formerly citizen and haberdasher of London, founded a school at Newport, in the county of Salop, by deed dated 27th of November, 1656, by which he granted, 'the yearly sum of *sixty pounds* to such able and learned schoolmaster, from time to time, being of godly life and conversation, who should have been educated at one of the Universities of Oxford or Cambridge, and had taken the degree of *Master of Arts*, and was well read in the Greek and Latin tongues, as should be nominated from time to time by the said William Adams, during his life; and after the decease of the said William Adams by the governors (namely, the Master and Wardens of the Haberdashers' Company of the city of London) and their successors.' The manor and lands out of which the revenues for the maintenance of the school were to issue are situate *at Knighton and Adbaston, in the county of Stafford.*" From the foregoing account of this foundation, particularly the circumstances of the salary being sixty pounds, and the degree of Master of Arts being a requisite qualification in the teacher, it seemed probable that this was the school in contemplation; and that Lord Gower erroneously supposed that the gentlemen who possessed the lands, out of which the revenues issued, were trustees of the charity. Such was the probable conjecture. But in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for May, 1793, there is a letter

obtain the degree of Master of Arts, Dr. Adams was applied to, by a common friend, to know whether that could be granted him as a favour from the University of Oxford.—But though he had made such a figure in the literary world, it was then thought too great a favour to be asked.

Pope, without any knowledge of him but from his "London," recommended him to Earl Gower, who endeavoured to procure for him a degree from Dublin, by the following letter to a friend of Dean Swift:

"SIR,

"MR. SAMUEL JOHNSON (author of "London," a satire, and some other poetical pieces) is a native of this country, and much respected by some worthy gentlemen in his neighbourhood, who are trustees of a charity-school now vacant; the certain salary is sixty pounds a year, of which they are desirous to make him master; but unfortunately, he is not capable of receiving their bounty, which *would make him happy for life*, by not being *a Master of Arts*; which by the statutes of this school, the master of it must be.

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from Mr. Henn, one of the masters of the school of Appleby, in Leicestershire, in which he writes as follows: "I compared time and circumstance together, in order to discover whether the school in question might not be this of Appleby. Some of the trustees at that period were 'worthy gentlemen of the neighbourhood of Lichfield.' Appleby itself is not far from the neighbourhood of Lichfield: the salary, the degree requisite, together with the *time of election*, all agreeing with the statutes of Appleby. The election, as said in the letter, 'could not be delayed longer than the 11th of next month,' which was the 11th of September, just three months after the annual audit-day of Appleby school, which is always on the 11th of June; and the statutes enjoin, *ne ullius præceptorum electio diutius tribus mensibus moraretur*, &c. These I thought to be convincing proofs that my conjecture was not ill-founded, and that in a future edition of that book, the circumstance might be recorded as fact. But what banishes every shadow of doubt, is the *Minute-book* of the school, which declares the head-mastership to be *at that time* VACANT." I cannot omit returning thanks to this learned gentleman for the very handsome manner in which he has in that letter been so good as to speak of this work. B.

"Now these gentlemen do me the honour to think that I have interest enough in you, to prevail upon you to write to Dean Swift, to persuade the University of Dublin to send a diploma to me, constituting this poor man Master of Arts in their University. They highly extol the man's learning and probity; and will not be persuaded, that the University will make any difficulty of conferring such a favour upon a stranger, if he is recommended by the Dean. They say, he is not afraid of the strictest examination, though he is of so long a journey; and will venture it, if the Dean thinks it necessary: choosing rather to die upon the road *than be starved to death in translating for booksellers;* which has been his only subsistence for some time past.

"I fear there is more difficulty in this affair, than those good-natured gentlemen apprehend; especially as their election cannot be delayed longer than the 11th of next month. If you see this matter in the same light that it appears to me, I hope you will burn this, and pardon me for giving you so much trouble about an impracticable thing; but, if you think there is a probability of obtaining the favour asked, I am sure your humanity, and propensity to relieve merit in distress, will incline you to serve the poor man, without my adding any more to the trouble I have already given you, than assuring you that I am, with great truth, Sir, your faithful servant,

"GOWER.

"Trentham, Aug. 1, 1739."

It was, perhaps, no small disappointment to Johnson that this respectable application had not the desired effect: yet how much reason has there been, both for himself and his country, to rejoice that it did not succeed, as he might probably have wasted in obscurity those hours in which he afterwards produced his incomparable works.

About this time he made one other effort to emancipate himself from the drudgery of authorship. He applied to Dr. Adams, to consult Dr. Smallbroke of the Commons, whether a person might be permitted to practise as an advocate there, without a doctor's degree in Civil Law. "I am," said he, "a total stranger to these studies; but whatever is a profession, and maintains numbers, must be within the reach of common abilities, and some degree of industry." Dr. Adams was much pleased with Johnson's design to employ his talents in that manner, being confident

he would have attained to great eminence. And, indeed, I cannot conceive a man better qualified to make a distinguished figure as a lawyer; for, he would have brought to his profession a rich store of various knowledge, an uncommon acuteness, and a command of language, in which few could have equalled, and none have surpassed him. He who could display eloquence and wit in defence of the decision of the House of Commons upon Mr. Wilkes's election for Middlesex, and of the unconstitutional taxation of our fellow-subjects in America, must have been a powerful advocate in any cause. But here, also, the want of a degree was an insurmountable bar.

He was therefore under the necessity of persevering in that course into which he had been forced; and we find, that his proposal from Greenwich to Mr. Cave, for a translation of Father Paul Sarpi's History, was accepted.[1]

Some sheets of this translation were printed off, but the design was dropped; for it happened, oddly enough, that another person of the name of Samuel Johnson, Librarian of St. Martin's in the Fields, and Curate of that parish, engaged in the same undertaking, and was patronised by

[1] In the *Weekly Miscellany*, October 21, 1738, there appeared the following advertisement: "Just published, proposals for printing the *History of the Council of Trent*, translated from the Italian of Father Paul Sarpi; with the Author's Life, and Notes theological, historical, and critical, from the French edition of Dr. Le Courayer. To which are added, Observations on the History, and Notes and Illustrations from various Authors, both printed and manuscript. By S. Johnson. 1. The work will consist of two hundred sheets, and be two volumes in quarto, printed on good paper and letter. 2. The price will be 18*s.* each volume, to be paid half a guinea at the delivery of the first volume, and the rest at the delivery of the second volume in sheets. 3. Twopence to be abated for every sheet less than two hundred. It may be had on a large paper, in three volumes, at the price of three guineas; one to be paid at the time of subscribing, another at the delivery of the first, and the rest at the delivery of the other volumes. The work is now in the press, and will be diligently prosecuted. Subscriptions are taken in by Mr. Dodsley in Pall-Mall, Mr. Rivington in St. Paul's Church-yard, by E. Cave at St. John's Gate, and the Translator, at No. 6, in Castle-street, by Cavendish-square." B.

the Clergy, particularly by Dr. Pearce, afterwards Bishop of Rochester. Several light skirmishes passed between the rival translators, in the newspapers of the day; and the consequence was that they destroyed each other, for neither of them went on with the work. It is much to be regretted, that the able performance of that celebrated genius FRA PAOLO, lost the advantage of being incorporated into British literature by the masterly hand of Johnson.

I have in my possession, by the favour of Mr. John Nichols, a paper in Johnson's hand-writing, entitled "Account between Mr. Edward Cave and Sam. Johnson, in relation to a version of Father Paul, &c., begun August the 2nd, 1738;" by which it appears, that from that day to the 21st of April, 1739, Johnson received for this work 49*l.* 7*s.* in sums of one, two, three, and sometimes four guineas at a time, most frequently two. And it is curious to observe the minute and scrupulous accuracy with which Johnson had pasted upon it a slip of paper, which he has entitled "Small account," and which contains one article, "Sept. 9th, Mr. Cave laid down 2*s.* 6*d.*" There is subjoined to this account, a list of some subscribers to the work, partly in Johnson's hand-writing, partly in that of another person; and there follows a leaf or two on which are written a number of characters which have the appearance of a short hand, which, perhaps, Johnson was then trying to learn.

"TO MR. CAVE.

"Wednesday.

"SIR,

"I DID not care to detain your servant while I wrote an answer to your letter, in which you seem to insinuate that I had promised more than I am ready to perform. If I have raised your expectations by any thing that may have escaped my memory, I am sorry; and if you remind me of it, shall thank you for the favour. If I made fewer alterations than usual in the Debates, it was only because there appeared, and still appears to be, less need of alteration. The verses to Lady Firebrace[1] may be had when

[1] They afterwards appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* with this title—"Verses to Lady Firebrace, at Bury Assizes." B.

you please, for you know that such a subject neither deserves much thought, nor requires it.

"The Chinese Stories[1] may be had folded down when you please to send, in which I do not recollect that you desired any alterations to be made.

"An answer to another query I am very willing to write, and had consulted with you about it last night, if there had been time; for I think it the most proper way of inviting such a correspondence as may be an advantage to the paper, not a load upon it.

"As to the Prize Verses, a backwardness to determine their degrees of merit is not peculiar to me. You may, if you please, still have what I can say; but I shall engage with little spirit in an affair, which I shall *hardly* end to my own satisfaction, and *certainly* not to the satisfaction of the parties concerned.[2]

"As to Father Paul, I have not yet been just to my proposal, but have met with impediments, which, I hope, are now at an end; and if you find the progress hereafter not such as you have a right to expect, you can easily stimulate a negligent translator.

"If any or all of these have contributed to your discontent, I will endeavour to remove it; and desire you to propose the question to which you wish for an answer.

"I am, Sir, your humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"TO MR. CAVE.

[*No date.*]

"SIR,

"I AM pretty much of your opinion, that the Commentary cannot be prosecuted with any appearance of success; for as the names of the authors concerned are of more weight in the performance than its own intrinsic merit, the public will be soon satisfied with it. And I think the Examen should be pushed forward with the utmost expedition. Thus, 'This day, &c. An Examen of Mr. Pope's Essay, &c. containing a succinct Account of the Philosophy of Mr. Leibnitz on the System of the Fatalists, with a Confutation of their Opinions, and an Illustration of the Doctrine of Free-will;' [with what else you think proper.]

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[1] Du Halde's *Description of China* was then publishing by Mr. Cave in weekly numbers, whence Johnson was to select pieces for the embellishment of the Magazine. (N.) B.

[2] The premium of forty pounds proposed for the best poem on the Divine Attributes is here alluded to. (N.) B.

"It will, above all, be necessary to take notice, that it is a thing distinct from the Commentary.

"I was so far from imagining they stood still,[1] that I conceived them to have a good deal beforehand, and therefore was less anxious in providing them more. But if ever they stand still on my account, it must doubtless be charged to me; and whatever else shall be reasonable, I shall not oppose; but beg a suspense of judgment till morning, when I must entreat you to send me a dozen proposals, and you shall then have copy to spare.

"I am, Sir, yours, *impransus*,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"Pray muster up the Proposals if you can, or let the boy recall them from the booksellers."

But although he corresponded with Mr. Cave concerning a translation of Crousaz's Examen of Pope's "Essay on Man," and gave advice as one anxious for its success, I was long ago convinced by a perusal of the Preface, that this translation was erroneously ascribed to him; and I have found this point ascertained, beyond all doubt, by the following article in Dr. Birch's Manuscripts in the British Museum:

"ELISÆ CARTERÆ, S. P. D. THOMAS BIRCH.

"*Versionem tuam Examinis Crousaziani jam perlegi. Summam styli et elegantiam, et in re difficillimâ proprietatem, admiratus.*

"*Dabam, Novemb.* 27° 1738."[2]

Indeed Mrs. Carter has lately acknowledged to Mr. Seward, that she was the translator of the "Examen."

It is remarkable, that Johnson's last quoted letter to Mr. Cave concludes with a fair confession that he had not a dinner; and it is no less remarkable, that though in this state of want himself, his benevolent heart was not insensible to the necessities of an humble labourer in literature, as appears from the very next letter:

[1] The compositors in Mr. Cave's printing-office, who appear by this letter to have then waited for copy. (N.) B.

[2] Birch MSS. Brit. Mus. 4323. B.

"TO MR. CAVE.

[*No date.*]

"DEAR SIR,

"You may remember I have formerly talked with you about a Military Dictionary. The eldest Mr. Macbean, who was with Mr. Chambers, has very good materials for such a work, which I have seen, and will do it at a very low rate.[1] I think the terms of War and Navigation might be comprised, with good explanations, in one 8vo. Pica, which he is willing to do for 12*s.* a sheet, to be made up a guinea at the second impression. If you think on it, I will wait on you with him.

"I am, Sir, your humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"Pray lend me Topsel on Animals."[2]

I must not omit to mention, that this Mr. Macbean was a native of Scotland.

In the "Gentleman's Magazine" of this year, Johnson gave a Life of Father Paul;* and he wrote the Preface to the Volume,† which, though prefixed to it when bound, is always published with the Appendix, and is therefore the last composition belonging to it. The ability and nice adaptation with which he could draw up a prefatory address, was one of his peculiar excellences.

It appears too, that he paid a friendly attention to Mrs. Elizabeth Carter; for, in a letter from Mr. Cave to Dr. Birch, November 28, this year, I find "Mr. Johnson advises Miss C. to undertake a translation of 'Boethius de Cons.,' because there is prose and verse, and to put her name to it when published." This advice was not followed; probably from an apprehension that the work was not sufficiently popular for an extensive sale. How well Johnson himself could have executed a translation of this philosophical poet, we may judge from the following specimen which he has given in the "Rambler": (*Motto to No.* 7.)

[1] This book was published. B.

[2] *The History of Four-footed Beasts and Animals*, by Edward Topsel, London, 1607. The book is quoted in Walton's *Complete Angler*.

"*O qui perpetuâ mundum ratione gubernas,*
Terrarum cœlique sator!———
Disjice terrenæ nebulas et pondera molis,
Atque tuo splendore mica! Tu namque serenum,
Tu requies tranquilla piis. Te cernere finis,
Principium, vector, dux, semita, terminus, idem."

O THOU whose power o'er moving worlds presides,
Whose voice created, and whose wisdom guides,
On darkling man in pure effulgence shine,
And cheer the clouded mind with light divine.
'Tis thine alone to calm the pious breast,
With silent confidence and holy rest;
From thee, great God! we spring, to thee we tend,
Path, motive, guide, original, and end!"

In 1739, beside the assistance which he gave to the Parliamentary Debates, his writings in the "Gentleman's Magazine" were, "The Life of Boerhaave," * in which it is to be observed, that he discovers that love of chemistry which never forsook him; "An Appeal to the Public in behalf of the Editor;" † "An Address to the Reader," † "An Epigram both in Greek and Latin to Eliza," * and also English verses to her; * and, "A Greek Epigram to Dr. Birch." * It has been erroneously supposed, that an Essay published in that Magazine this year, entitled "The Apotheosis of Milton," was written by Johnson; and on that supposition it has been improperly inserted in the edition of his works by the booksellers, after his decease. Were there no positive testimony as to this point, the style of the performance, and the name of Shakespeare not being mentioned in an Essay professedly reviewing the principal English Poets, would ascertain it not to be the production of Johnson. But there is here no occasion to resort to internal evidence; for my Lord Bishop of Salisbury (Dr. Douglas) has assured me, that it was written by Guthrie. His separate publications were, "A Complete Vindication of the Licensers of the Stage, from the malicious and scandalous Aspersions of Mr. Brooke, Author of Gustavus Vasa," * being an ironical Attack upon them for their Suppression

of that Tragedy;[1] and, "Marmor Norfolciense; or an Essay on an ancient prophetical Inscription, in monkish Rhyme, lately discovered near Lynne in Norfolk, by Probus Britannicus." * In this performance, he, in a feigned inscription, supposed to have been found in Norfolk, the county of Sir Robert Walpole, then the obnoxious prime minister of this country, inveighs against the Brunswick succession, and the measures of government consequent upon it.[2] To this supposed prophecy he added a Commentary, making each expression apply to the times, with warm Anti-Hanoverian zeal.

This anonymous pamphlet, I believe, did not make so much noise as was expected, and, therefore, had not a very extensive circulation. Sir John Hawkins relates, that "Warrants were issued, and messengers employed to apprehend the author; who, though he had forborne to subscribe his name to the pamphlet, the vigilance of those in pursuit of him had discovered;" and we are informed, that he lay concealed in Lambeth-marsh till the scent after him grew cold. This, however, is altogether without foundation; for Mr. Steele, one of the Secretaries of the Treasury, who amidst a variety of important business, politely obliged me with his attention to my inquiry, informed me, that "He directed every possible search to be made in the records of the Treasury and Secretary of State's Office, but could find no trace whatever of any warrant having been issued to apprehend the author of this pamphlet."

"Marmor Norfolciense" became exceedingly scarce, so that I for many years endeavoured in vain to procure a copy of it. At last I was indebted to the malice of one of Johnson's numerous petty adversaries, who in 1775, published a new edition of it, "with Notes and a Dedi-

[1] Henry Brooke (1706—83), an Irishman, author of the novel called *The Fool of Quality*. His tragedy of *Gustavus Vasa* was put in rehearsal at Drury Lane, but prohibited as supposed to satirize Walpole. Brooke then published the play by a subscription, which amounted to £800.

[2] The Inscription and the Translation of it are preserved in *The London Magazine* for the year 1739, p. 244. B.

cation to SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D., by TRIBUNUS;" in which some puny scribbler invidiously attempted to found upon it a charge of inconsistency against its author, because he had accepted of a pension from his present Majesty, and had written in support of the measures of government. As a mortification to such impotent malice, of which there are so many instances towards men of eminence, I am happy to relate that this *telum imbelle* did not reach its exalted object till about a year after it thus appeared, when I mentioned it to him, supposing that he knew of the republication. To my surprise, he had not yet heard of it. He requested me to go directly and get it for him, which I did. He looked at it and laughed, and seemed to be much diverted with the feeble efforts of his unknown adversary, who, I hope, is alive to read this account. "Now," said he, "here is somebody who thinks he has vexed me sadly; yet, if it had not been for you, you rogue, I should probably never have seen it."

As Mr. Pope's note concerning Johnson, alluded to in a former page, refers both to his "London," and his "Marmor Norfolciense," I have deferred inserting it till now. I am indebted for it to Dr. Percy, the Bishop of Dromore, who permitted me to copy it from the original in his possession. It was presented to his Lordship by Sir Joshua Reynolds, to whom it was given by the son of Mr. Richardson the painter, the person to whom it is addressed. I have transcribed it with minute exactness, that the peculiar mode of writing, and imperfect spelling of that celebrated poet, may be exhibited to the curious in literature. It justifies Swift's epithet of "paper-sparing Pope,"[1]

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[1] "Get all your verses printed fair,
Then let them well be dried,
And Curll must have a special care
To leave the margin wide.

"Send these to Paper-sparing Pope;
And when he sits to write,
No letter with an envelope
Could give him more delight."
Swift's *Advice to Grub-street Writers.*

for it is written on a slip no larger than a common message-card, and was sent to Mr. Richardson, along with the imitation of Juvenal.

"This is imitated by one Johnson who put in for a Publick-school in Shropshire,[1] but was disappointed. He has an infirmity of the convulsive kind, that attacks him sometimes, so as to make Him a Sad Spectacle. Mr. P. from the Merit of This Work which was all the knowledge he had of Him endeavour'd to serve Him without his own application; & wrote to my L^d^. gore, but he did not succeed. Mr. Johnson published afterw^ds^. another Poem in Latin with Notes the whole very Humerous call'd the Norfolk Prophecy.

"P."

Johnson had been told of this note; and Sir Joshua Reynolds informed him of the compliment which it contained, but, from delicacy, avoided shewing him the paper itself. When Sir Joshua observed to Johnson that he seemed very desirous to see Pope's note, he answered, "Who would not be proud to have such a man as Pope so solicitous in inquiring about him?"

The infirmity to which Mr. Pope alludes, appeared to me also, as I have elsewhere[2] observed, to be of the convulsive kind, and of the nature of that distemper called St. Vitus's dance; and in this opinion I am confirmed by the description which Sydenham gives of that disease. "This disorder is a kind of convulsion. It manifests itself by halting or unsteadiness of one of the legs, which the patient draws after him like an idiot. If the hand of the same side be applied to the breast, or any other part of the body, he cannot keep it a moment in the same posture, but it will be drawn into a different one by a convulsion, notwithstanding all his efforts to the contrary." Sir Joshua Reynolds, however, was of a different opinion, and favoured me with the following paper:

The manuscript of Pope's translations of the Iliad and Odyssey, which is preserved in the British Museum, is mostly written on the backs of letters.

[1] See note on p. 86. B.

[2] *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, 3rd edit. p. 8. B.

"Those motions or tricks of Dr. Johnson are improperly called convulsions. He could sit motionless, when he was told so to do, as well as any other man. My opinion is, that it proceeded from a habit which he had indulged himself in, of accompanying his thoughts with certain untoward actions, and those actions always appeared to me as if they were meant to reprobate some part of his past conduct. Whenever he was not engaged in conversation, such thoughts were sure to rush into his mind; and, for this reason, any company, any employment whatever, he preferred to being alone. The great business of his life, he said, was to escape from himself; this disposition he considered as the disease of his mind, which nothing cured but company.

"One instance of his absence and particularity, as it is characteristic of the man, may be worth relating. When he and I took a journey together into the West, we visited the late Mr. Banks, of Dorsetshire; the conversation turning upon pictures, which Johnson could not well see, he retired to a corner of the room, stretching out his right leg as far as he could reach before him, then bringing up his left leg, and, stretching his right still further on. The old gentleman observing him, went up to him, and in a very courteous manner assured him, though it was not a new house, the flooring was perfectly safe. The Doctor started from his reverie, like a person waked out of his sleep, but spoke not a word."

While we are on this subject, my readers may not be displeased with another anecdote, communicated to me by the same friend, from the relation of Mr. Hogarth.

Johnson used to be a pretty frequent visitor at the house of Mr. Richardson, author of "Clarissa," and other novels of extensive reputation. Mr. Hogarth came one day to see Richardson, soon after the execution of Dr. Cameron, for having taken arms for the House of Stuart in 1745-6; and being a warm partisan of George the Second, he observed to Richardson, that certainly there must have been some very unfavourable circumstances lately discovered in this particular case, which had induced the King to approve of an execution for rebellion so long after the time when it was committed, as this had the appearance of putting a man to death in cold blood,[1] and

[1] Impartial posterity may, perhaps, be as little inclined as Dr. Johnson was, to justify the uncommon rigour exercised in the case of Dr. Archibald Cameron. He was an amiable and truly honest

was very unlike his Majesty's usual clemency. While he was talking, he perceived a person standing at a window in the room, shaking his head, and rolling himself about in a strange ridiculous manner. He concluded that he was an idiot, whom his relations had put under the care of Mr. Richardson, as a very good man. To his great surprise, however, this figure stalked forwards to where he and Mr. Richardson were sitting, and all at once took up the argument, and burst out into an invective against George the Second, as one, who, upon all occasions, was unrelenting and barbarous; mentioning many instances, particularly, that when an officer of high rank had been acquitted by a Court Martial, George the Second had with his own hand struck his name off the list. In short, he displayed such a power of eloquence, that Hogarth looked at him with astonishment, and actually imagined that this idiot had been at the moment inspired. Neither Hogarth nor Johnson were made known to each other at this interview.

In 1740 he wrote for the "Gentleman's Magazine" the Preface,† "The Life of Admiral Blake," * and the first parts of those of "Sir Francis Drake," * and "Philip Barretier," * both which he finished the following year. He also wrote an "Essay on Epitaphs," * and an "Epitaph on Phillips, a Musician," * which was afterwards published, with some other pieces of his, in Mrs. Williams's Miscellanies. This Epitaph is so exquisitely

man; and his offence was owing to a generous, though mistaken principle of duty. Being obliged, after 1746, to give up his profession as a physician, and to go into foreign parts, he was honoured with the rank of Colonel, both in the French and Spanish service. He was a son of the ancient and respectable family of Cameron of Lochiel; and his brother, who was the Chief of that brave clan, distinguished himself by moderation and humanity, while the Highland army marched victorious through Scotland. It is remarkable of this Chief, that though he had earnestly remonstrated against the attempt as hopeless, he was of too heroic a spirit not to venture his life and fortune in the cause, when personally asked by him whom he thought his Prince. B. See the Introduction to *Redgauntlet*. Cameron was executed June 7, 1753.

beautiful, that I remember even Lord Kames, strangely prejudiced as he was against Dr. Johnson, was compelled to allow it very high praise. It has been ascribed to Mr. Garrick, from its appearing at first with the signature G; but I have heard Mr. Garrick declare, that it was written by Dr. Johnson, and give the following account of the manner in which it was composed. Johnson and he were sitting together; when, amongst other things, Garrick repeated an Epitaph upon this Phillips by a Dr. Wilkes, in these words:

> "Exalted soul! whose harmony could please
> The love-sick virgin, and the gouty ease;
> Could jarring discord, like Amphion, move
> To beauteous order and harmonious love;
> Rest here in peace, till angels bid thee rise,
> And meet thy blessed Saviour in the skies."

Johnson shook his head at these common-place funereal lines, and said to Garrick, "I think, Davy, I can make a better." Then stirring about his tea for a little while, in a state of meditation, he almost extempore produced the following verses:

> "Phillips, whose touch harmonious could remove
> The pangs of guilty power or hapless love;
> Rest here, distress'd by poverty no more,
> Here find that calm thou gav'st so oft before;
> Sleep, undisturb'd, within this peaceful shrine,
> Till angels wake thee with a note like thine!"[1]

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[1] The epitaph of Phillips is in the porch of Wolverhampton Church. The prose part of it is curious:—"Near this place lies CHARLES CLAUDIUS PHILLIPS, Whose absolute contempt of riches and inimitable performances upon the violin, made him the admiration of all that knew him. He was born in Wales, made the tour of Europe, and, after the experience of both kinds of fortune, Died in 1732." Mr. Garrick appears not to have recited the verses correctly, the original being as follows. One of the various readings is remarkable, as it is the germ of Johnson's concluding line:

> "Exalted soul, *thy various sounds* could please
> The love-sick virgin, and the gouty ease;

At the same time that Mr. Garrick favoured me with this anecdote, he repeated a very pointed epigram by Johnson on George the Second and Colley Cibber, which has never yet appeared, and of which I know not the exact date. Dr. Johnson afterwards gave it to me himself:

> "Augustus still survives in Maro's strain,
> And Spenser's verse prolongs Eliza's reign;
> Great George's acts let tuneful Cibber sing;
> For Nature form'd the Poet for the King."

In 1741 he wrote for the "Gentleman's Magazine" the Preface,† "Conclusion of his lives of Drake and Barretier,"* "A free translation of the Jests of Hierocles with an Introduction;" † and, I think, the following pieces: "Debate on the Proposal of Parliament to Cromwell, to assume the Title of King, abridged, modified, and digested;" † "Translation of Abbé Guyon's Dissertation on the Amazons;" † "Translation of Fontenelle's Panegyrick on Dr. Morin." † Two notes upon this appear to me undoubtedly his. He this year, and the two following, wrote the Parliamentary Debates. He told me himself, that he was the sole composer of them for those three years only. He was not, however, precisely exact in his statement, which he mentioned from hasty recollection; for it is sufficiently evident, that his composition of them began November 19, 1740, and ended February 23, 1742-3.

It appears from some of Cave's letters to Dr. Birch that Cave had better assistance for that branch of his Magazine, than has been generally supposed; and that he was indefatigable in getting it made as perfect as he could.

> Could jarring *crowds*, like *old* Amphion, move
> To beauteous order and harmonious love;
> Rest here in peace, till angels bid thee rise,
> And meet thy SAVIOUR'S *consort* in the skies."

From a note contributed to the 3rd edition by the Rev. J. B. Blakeway, of Shrewsbury. *Consort* would now be spelled *concert*.

Thus, 21st July, 1735, "I trouble you with the enclosed, because you said you could easily correct what is here given for Lord Chesterfield's speech. I beg you will do so as soon as you can for me, because the month is far advanced."

And 15th July, 1737, "As you remember the Debates so far as to perceive the speeches already printed are not exact, I beg the favour that you will peruse the enclosed, and, in the best manner your memory will serve, correct the mistaken passages, or add any thing that is omitted. I should be very glad to have something of the Duke of Newcastle's speech, which would be particularly of service.

"A gentleman has Lord Bathurst's speech to add something to."

And July 3, 1744, "You will see what stupid, low abominable stuff is put[1] upon your noble and learned friend's[2] character, such as I should quite reject, and endeavour to do something better towards doing justice to the character. But as I cannot expect to attain my desire in that respect, it would be a great satisfaction, as well as an honour to our work, to have the favour of the genuine speech. It is a method that several have been pleased to take, as I could shew, but I think myself under a restraint. I shall say so far, that I have had some by a third hand, which I understood well enough to come from the first; others by penny-post, and others by the speakers themselves, who have been pleased to visit St. John's Gate, and shew particular marks of their being pleased."[3]

There is no reason, I believe, to doubt the veracity of Cave. It is, however, remarkable, that none of these letters are in the years during which Johnson alone furnished the Debates, and one of them is in the very year after he ceased from that labour. Johnson told me, that as soon as he found that the speeches were thought genuine, he determined that he would write no

[1] I suppose in another compilation of the same kind. B.

[2] Doubtless, Lord Hardwicke. B.

[3] Birch's MSS. in the British Museum, 4302. B.

more of them ; "For he would not be accessory to the propagation of falsehood." And such was the tenderness of his conscience, that a short time before his death, he expressed his regret for his having been the author of fictions, which had passed for realities.

He nevertheless agreed with me in thinking, that the Debates which he had framed were to be valued as orations upon questions of public importance. They have accordingly been collected in volumes, properly arranged, and recommended to the notice of parliamentary speakers by a preface, written by no inferior hand.[1] I must, however, observe, that although there is in those Debates a wonderful store of political information, and very powerful eloquence, I cannot agree that they exhibit the manner of each particular speaker, as Sir John Hawkins seems to think. But, indeed, what opinion can we have of his judgment, and taste in public speaking, who presumes to give, as the characteristics of two celebrated orators, "The deep-mouthed rancour of Pulteney, and the yelping pertinacity of Pitt." [2]

This year I find that his tragedy of IRENE had been for some time ready for the stage, and that his necessities made him desirous of getting as much as he could for it, without delay ; for there is the following letter from Mr.

[1] I am assured that the editor is Mr. George Chalmers, whose commercial works are well-known and esteemed. B.

[2] Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, p. 100. B. The authorship of these Debates was not known outside Cave's office, and according to Murphy (*Essay on the Life and Genius of Dr. Johnson*) was first avowed by Johnson himself at a dinner given by Foote. The company were praising a speech delivered by Pitt towards the close of Walpole's administration as equal to anything in the orations of Demosthenes. "That speech," said Johnson, "I wrote in a garret in Exeter Street," and then proceeded to explain how it was done. One of the company praised his impartiality, observing that he dealt out reason and eloquence with an equal hand to both parties. "That is not quite true," was the answer. "I saved appearances tolerably well ; but I took care that the Whig dogs should not have the best of it." According to Hawkins, the sale of the *Gentleman's Magazine* increased from 10,000 to 15,000 copies a month while Johnson wrote the Debates.

Cave to Dr. Birch, in the same volume of manuscripts in the British Museum, from which I copied those above quoted. They were most obligingly pointed out to me by Sir William Musgrave, one of the Curators of that noble repository.

"Sept. 9, 1741.

"I HAVE put Mr. Johnson's play into Mr. Gray's[1] hands, in order to sell it to him, if he is inclined to buy it; but I doubt whether he will or not. He would dispose of the copy, and whatever advantage may be made by acting it. Would your society,[2] or any gentleman, or body of men that you know, take such a bargain? He and I are very unfit to deal with theatrical persons. Fleetwood was to have acted it last season, but Johnson's diffidence or prevented it."[3]

I have already mentioned that "Irene" was not brought into publick notice till Garrick was manager of Drury-lane theatre.

In 1742 he wrote for the "Gentleman's Magazine" the Preface,* the Parliamentary Debates,* "Essay on the Account of the Conduct of the Duchess of Marlborough,"* then the popular topic of conversation. This Essay is a short but masterly performance. We find him in No. 13 of his "Rambler," censuring a profligate sentiment in that "Account"; and again insisting upon it strenuously in conversation.[4] "An Account of the Life of Peter Burman,"* I believe chiefly taken from a foreign publication; as, indeed, he could not himself know much about Burman; "Additions to his Life of Barretier;"* "The Life of Sydenham,"* afterwards prefixed to Dr. Swan's edition of his works; "Proposals for printing Bibliotheca Har-

[1] A bookseller of London. B.

[2] Not the Royal Society; but the Society for the encouragement of learning, of which Dr. Birch was a leading member. Their object was to assist authors in printing expensive works. It existed from about 1735 to 1746, when, having incurred a considerable debt, it was dissolved. B.

[3] There is no erasure here, but a mere blank; to fill up which may be an exercise for ingenious conjecture. B.

[4] *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, 3rd edit. p. 167. B.

leiana, or a Catalogue of the Library of the Earl of Oxford."* His account of that celebrated collection of books, in which he displays the importance to literature, of what the French call a *catalogue raisonné*, when the subjects of it are extensive and various, and it is executed with ability, cannot fail to impress all his readers with admiration of his philological attainments. It was afterwards prefixed to the first volume of the Catalogue, in which the Latin accounts of books were written by him. He was employed in this business by Mr. Thomas Osborne the bookseller,[1] who purchased the library for 13,000*l.*, a sum which Mr. Oldys says, in one of his manuscripts, was not more than the binding of the books had cost; yet, as Dr. Johnson assured me, the slowness of the sale was such, that there was not much gained by it. It has been confidently related, with many embellishments, that Johnson one day knocked Osborne down in his shop, with a folio, and put his foot upon his neck. The simple truth I had from Johnson himself. "Sir, he was impertinent to me, and I beat him. But it was not in his shop: it was in my own chamber."

A very diligent observer may trace him where we should not easily suppose him to be found. I have no doubt that he wrote the little abridgment entitled "Foreign History," in the Magazine for December. To prove it, I shall quote the Introduction. "As this is that season of the year in which Nature may be said to command a suspension of hostilities, and which seems intended, by putting a short stop to violence and slaughter, to afford time for malice to relent, and animosity to subside; we can scarce expect any other account than of plans, negotiations, and treaties, of proposals for peace, and preparations for war." As also this passage: "Let those who despise the capacity of the Swiss, tell us by what wonderful policy, or by what happy conciliation of interests, it is brought to pass, that in a body made up of different communities and different religions, there should be no civil commo-

[1] See *The Dunciad* (ii. 167), and *Lives of the Poets* (Pope).

tions, though the people are so warlike, that, to nominate and raise an army is the same."

I am obliged to Mr. Astle [1] for his ready permission to copy the two following letters of which the originals are in his possession. Their contents shew that they were written about this time, and that Johnson was now engaged in preparing an historical account of the British Parliament.

"TO MR. CAVE.

[*No date.*]

"SIR,

"I BELIEVE I am going to write a long letter, and have therefore taken a whole sheet of paper. The first thing to be written about is our historical design.

"You mentioned the proposal of printing in numbers, as an alteration in the scheme, but I believe you mistook, some way or other, my meaning; I had no other view than that you might rather print too many of five sheets, than of five-and-thirty.

"With regard to what I shall say on the manner of proceeding, I would have it understood as wholly indifferent to me, and my opinion only, not my resolution. *Emptoris sit eligere.*

"I think the insertion of the exact dates of the most important events in the margin, or of so many events as may enable the reader to regulate the order of facts with sufficient exactness, the proper medium between a journal, which has regard only to time, and a history which ranges facts according to their dependence on each other, and postpones or anticipates according to the convenience of narration. I think the work ought to partake of the spirit of history, which is contrary to minute exactness, and of the regularity of a journal, which is inconsistent with spirit. For this reason, I neither admit numbers nor dates, nor reject them.

"I am of your opinion with regard to placing most of the resolutions, &c., in the margin, and think we shall give the most complete account of parliamentary proceedings that can be contrived. The naked papers, without an historical treatise interwoven, require some other book to make them understood. I will date the succeeding facts with some exactness, but I think in the margin. You told me on Saturday that I had received money on

[1] Thomas Astle was for many years Keeper of the Records in the Tower, one of the Keepers of the Paper Office, and a Trustee of the British Museum. Horace Walpole (*Letters*, vi. 299) calls him, "A wight who lives like moths on old parchments."

this work, and found set down 13*l.* 2*s.* 6*d.* reckoning the half-guinea of last Saturday. As you hinted to me that you had many calls for money, I would not press you too hard, and therefore shall desire only, as I send it in, two guineas for a sheet of copy; the rest you may pay me, when it may be more convenient; and even by this sheet-payment I shall, for some time, be very expensive.

"The Life of Savage I am ready to go upon; and in Great Primer, and Pica notes, I reckon on sending in half a sheet a day; but the money for that shall likewise lie by in your hands till it is done. With the debates, shall not I have business enough? if I had but good pens.

"Towards Mr. Savage's Life what more have you got? I would willingly have his trial, &c., and know whether his defence be at Bristol, and would have his collection of poems, on account of the Preface;—"The Plain Dealer,"[1]—all the magazines that have any thing of his or relating to him.

"I thought my letter would be long, but it is now ended; and, I am, Sir, yours, &c.,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"The boy found me writing this almost in the dark, when I could not quite easily read yours.

"I have read the Italian:—nothing in it is well.

"I had no notion of having any thing for the inscription. I hope you don't think I kept it to extort a price. I could think of nothing till to-day. If you could spare me another guinea for the history, I should take it very kindly, to-night; but if you do not, I shall not think it an injury.—I am almost well again."

"TO MR. CAVE.

"SIR,

"You did not tell me your determination about the *Soldier's Letter*,[2] which I am confident was never printed. I think it will not do by itself, or in any other place, so well as the Mag. Extraordinary. If you will have it all, I believe you do not think I set it high, and I will be glad if what you give, you will give quickly.

"You need not be in care about something to print, for I have got the State Trials, and shall extract Layer, Atterbury, and Macclesfield from them, and shall bring them to you in a fortnight; after which I will try to get the South Sea Report."

[*No date, nor signature.*]

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[1] *The Plain Dealer* was published in 1724, and contained some account of Savage. B.

[2] I have not discovered what this was. B.

I would also ascribe to him an "Essay on the Description of China, from the French of Du Halde." †

His writings in the "Gentleman's Magazine" in 1743, are, the Preface,† the Parliamentary Debates,† "Considerations on the Dispute between Crousaz and Warburton, on Pope's 'Essay on Man';" † in which, while he defends Crousaz, he shews an admirable metaphysical acuteness and temperance in controversy; "Ad Lauram parituram Epigramma;" *[1] and, "A Latin Translation of Pope's Verses on his Grotto;" * and, as he could employ his pen with equal success upon a small matter as a great, I suppose him to be the author of an advertisement for Osborne, concerning the great Harleian Catalogue.

But I should think myself much wanting, both to my illustrious friend and my readers, did I not introduce here, with more than ordinary respect, an exquisitely beautiful Ode, which has not been inserted in any of the collections of Johnson's poetry, written by him at a very early period, as Mr. Hector informs me, and inserted in the "Gentleman's Magazine" of this year.

FRIENDSHIP, *an* ODE.*

FRIENDSHIP, peculiar boon of heav'n,
The noble mind's delight and pride,
To men and angels only giv'n,
To all the lower world deny'd.

While love unknown among the blest,
Parent of thousand wild desires,
The savage and the human breast
Torments alike with raging fires;

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[1] *Angliacas inter pulcherrima Laura puellas,*
Mox uteri pondus depositura grave,
Adsit, Laura, tibi facilis Lucina dolenti,
Neve tibi noceat prænituisse Deæ.

Mr. Hector was present when this Epigram was made *impromptu*. The first line was proposed by Dr. James, and Johnson was called upon by the company to finish it, which he instantly did. B.

With bright, but oft destructive, gleam,
Alike o'er all his lightnings fly;
Thy lambent glories only beam
Around the fav'rites of the sky.

Thy gentle flows of guiltless joys
On fools and villains ne'er descend:
In vain for thee the tyrant sighs,
And hugs a flatterer for a friend.

Directress of the brave and just,
O guide us through life's darksome way!
And let the tortures of mistrust
On selfish bosoms only prey.

Nor shall thine ardour cease to glow,
When souls to blissful climes remove:
What rais'd our virtue here below,
Shall aid our happiness above.

Johnson had now an opportunity of obliging his schoolfellow, Dr. James, of whom he once observed, "no man brings more mind to his profession." James published this year his "Medicinal Dictionary," in three volumes folio. Johnson, as I understood from him, had written, or assisted in writing, the proposals for this work; and being very fond of the study of physic, in which James was his master, he furnished some of the articles. He, however, certainly wrote for it the Dedication to Dr. Mead,† which is conceived with great address, to conciliate the patronage of that very eminent man.[1]

[1] "TO DR. MEAD.

"SIR,—That the *Medicinal Dictionary* is dedicated to you, is to be imputed only to your reputation for superior skill in those sciences which I have endeavoured to explain and facilitate: and you are, therefore, to consider this address, if it be agreeable to you, as one of the rewards of merit, and if otherwise, as one of the inconveniences of eminence. However you shall receive it, my design cannot be disappointed: because this public appeal to your judgment will shew that I do not found my hopes of approbation upon the ignorance of my readers, and that I fear his censure least, whose knowledge is most extensive. I am, Sir, your most obedient humble servant, R. JAMES." B.

Richard Mead (1675—1754) studied at Utrecht, Leyden, and

It has been circulated, I know not with what authenticity, that Johnson considered Dr. Birch as a dull writer, and said of him, "Tom Birch is as brisk as a bee in conversation; but no sooner does he take a pen in his hand, than it becomes a torpedo to him, and benumbs all his faculties." That the literature of this country is much indebted to Birch's activity and diligence must certainly be acknowledged. We have seen that Johnson honoured him with a Greek Epigram; and his correspondence with him, during many years, proves that he had no mean opinion of him.[1]

"TO DR. BIRCH.

"Thursday, Sept. 29, 1743.

"SIR,

"I HOPE you will excuse me for troubling you on an occasion on which I know not whom else I can apply to; I am at a loss for the Lives and Characters of Earl Stanhope, the two Craggs, and the minister Sunderland; and beg that you will inform [me] where I may find them, and send any pamphlets, &c., relating to them to Mr. Cave to be perused for a few days by, Sir, your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

His circumstances were at this time embarrassed; yet his affection for his mother was so warm, and so liberal, that he took upon himself a debt of hers, which, though small in itself, was then considerable to him. This appears from the following letter which he wrote to Mr. Levett, of Lichfield, the original of which lies now before me.

Padua, where he took his doctor's degree. He was appointed physician to St. Thomas's Hospital, and was a strong supporter of inoculation for small-pox. He published several works on his profession.

[1] Thomas Birch (1705—66), originally a Quaker, afterwards a clergyman of the Church of England. He was chaplain to Lord Kilmarnock, who was executed for his share in the Rebellion of 1745; a voluminous writer, and an honest, industrious man. He left his library and collection of manuscripts to the British Museum, of which he was a trustee.

"TO MR. LEVETT; IN LICHFIELD.

"December 1, 1743.

"SIR,

"I AM extremely sorry that we have encroached so much upon your forbearance with respect to the interest, which a great perplexity of affairs hindered me from thinking of with that attention that I ought, and which I am not immediately able to remit to you, but will pay it (I think twelve pounds) in two months. I look upon this, and on the future interest of that mortgage, as my own debt; and beg that you will be pleased to give me directions how to pay it, and not mention it to my dear mother. If it be necessary to pay this in less time, I believe I can do it; but I take two months for certainty, and beg an answer whether you can allow me so much time. I think myself very much obliged to your forbearance, and shall esteem it a great happiness to be able to serve you. I have great opportunities of dispersing any thing that you may think it proper to make public. I will give a note for the money, payable at the time mentioned, to any one here that you shall appoint. I am, Sir, your most obedient and most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"At Mr. Osborne's, bookseller,
in Gray's Inn."

It does not appear that he wrote any thing in 1774 for the "Gentleman's Magazine," but the Preface.† His "Life of Barretier" was now re-published in a pamphlet by itself. But he produced one work this year, fully sufficient to maintain the high reputation which he had acquired. This was "THE LIFE OF RICHARD SAVAGE";* a man, of whom it is difficult to speak impartially, without wondering that he was for some time the intimate companion of Johnson; for his character[1] was marked by

[1] As a specimen of his temper, I insert the following letter from him to a noble Lord [Tyrconnel], to whom he was under great obligations, but who, on account of his bad conduct, was obliged to discard him. The original was in the hands of the late Francis Cockayne Cust, Esq., one of his Majesty's Counsel learned in the law: "*Right Honourable* BRUTE *and* BOOBY,—I find you want (as Mr. —— is pleased to hint) to swear away my life, that is, the life of your creditor, because he asks you for a debt.—The public

profligacy, insolence and ingratitude: yet, as he undoubtedly had a warm and vigorous, though unregulated mind, had seen life in all its varieties, and been much in the company of the statesmen and wits of his time, he could communicate to Johnson an abundant supply of such materials as his philosophical curiosity most eagerly desired; and, as Savage's misfortunes and misconduct had reduced him to the lowest state of wretchedness as a writer for his bread, his visit to St. John's Gate naturally brought Johnson and him together.[1]

It is melancholy to reflect, that Johnson and Savage

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shall soon be acquainted with this, to judge whether you are not fitter to be an Irish Evidence, than to be an Irish Peer.—I defy and despise you. I am, your determined adversary, R. S." B.

[1] Sir John Hawkins gives the world to understand, that Johnson, "Being an admirer of genteel manners, was captivated by the address and demeanour of Savage, who, as to his exterior, was to a remarkable degree accomplished."—Hawkins's *Life*, p. 52. But Sir John's notions of gentility must appear somewhat ludicrous, from his stating the following circumstance as presumptive evidence that Savage was a good swordsman: "That he understood the exercise of a gentleman's weapon, may be inferred from the use made of it in that rash encounter which is related in his life." The dexterity here alluded to was, that Savage, in a nocturnal fit of drunkenness, stabbed a man at a coffee-house, and killed him: for which he was tried at the Old Bailey, and found guilty of murder. Johnson, indeed, describes him as having "A grave and manly deportment, a solemn dignity of mien; but which, upon a nearer acquaintance, softened into an engaging easiness of manners." How highly Johnson admired him for that knowledge which he himself so much cultivated, and what kindness he entertained for him, appears from the following lines in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for April, 1738, which I am assured were written by Johnson:

Ad Ricardum Savage.

"*Humani studium generis cui pectore fervet,*
O colat humanum te foveatque genus." B.

The original title, given by Croker, is as absurd as the lines themselves.

"*Ad Ricardum Savage, Arm: Humani generis amatorem.*

To Richard Savage, Esquire, the lover of the human race."

were sometimes in such extreme indigence,[1] that they could not pay for a lodging; so that they have wandered together whole nights in the streets. Yet in these almost incredible scenes of distress, we may suppose that Savage mentioned many of the anecdotes with which Johnson afterwards enriched the life of this unhappy companion, and those of other poets.

He told Sir Joshua Reynolds, that one night in particular, when Savage and he walked round St. James's Square for want of a lodging, they were not at all depressed by their situation; but in high spirits and brimful of patriotism, traversed the square for several hours, inveighed against the minister, and "resolved they would *stand by their country*."

I am afraid, however, that by associating with Savage, who was habituated to the dissipation and licentiousness of the town, Johnson, though his good principles remained steady, did not entirely preserve that conduct, for which, in days of greater simplicity, he was remarked by his friend Mr. Hector; but was imperceptibly led into some indulgences which occasioned much distress to his virtuous mind.

That Johnson was anxious that an authentic and favourable account of his extraordinary friend should first get possession of the public attention, is evident from a letter which he wrote in the "Gentleman's Magazine" for August of the year preceding its publication.

[1] The following striking proof of Johnson's extreme indigence, when he published the *Life of Savage*, was, (says Malone,) communicated to Mr. Boswell, by Mr. Richard Stowe, of Apsley, in Bedfordshire, from the information of Mr. Walter Harte, author of the *Life of Gustavus Adolphus*, and tutor to Lord Chesterfield's son. "Soon after Savage's *Life* was published, Mr. Harte dined with Edward Cave, and occasionally praised it. Soon after, meeting him, Cave said, 'You made a man very happy t'other day.'—'How could that be?' says Harte; 'nobody was there but ourselves.' Cave answered by reminding him that a plate of victuals was sent behind a screen, which was to Johnson, dressed so shabbily, that he did not choose to appear; but on hearing the conversation, he was highly delighted with the encomiums on his book."

"MR. URBAN,

"As your collections shew how often you have owed the ornaments of your poetical pages to the correspondence of the unfortunate and ingenious Mr. Savage, I doubt not but you have so much regard to his memory as to encourage any design that may have a tendency to the preservation of it from insults or calumnies; and therefore, with some degree of assurance, entreat you to inform the public, that his life will speedily be published by a person who was favoured with his confidence, and received from himself an account of most of the transactions which he proposes to mention, to the time of his retirement to Swansea in Wales.

"From that period, to his death in the prison of Bristol, the account will be continued from materials still less liable to objection; his own letters, and those of his friends, some of which will be inserted in the work, and abstracts of others subjoined in the margin.

"It may be reasonably imagined, that others may have the same design; but as it is not credible that they can obtain the same materials, it must be expected they will supply from invention the want of intelligence; and that under the title of 'The Life of Savage,' they will publish only a novel, filled with romantic adventures, and imaginary amours. You may therefore, perhaps, gratify the lovers of truth and wit, by giving me leave to inform them in your Magazine, that my account will be published in 8vo by Mr. Roberts, in Warwick-lane."

[*No signature.*]

In February, 1744, it accordingly came forth from the shop of Roberts, between whom and Johnson I have not traced any connexion, except the casual one of this publication. In Johnson's "Life of Savage," although it must be allowed that its moral is the reverse of—"*Respicere exemplar vitæ morumque jubebo*," a very useful lesson is inculcated, to guard men of warm passions from a too free indulgence of them; and the various incidents are related in so clear and animated a manner, and illuminated throughout with so much philosophy, that it is one of the most interesting narratives in the English language. Sir Joshua Reynolds told me, that upon his return from Italy he met with it in Devonshire, knowing nothing of its author, and began to read it while he was standing with his arm leaning against a chimney-piece. It seized his attention so strongly, that, not being able to lay down

the book till he had finished it, when he attempted to move, he found his arm totally benumbed. The rapidity with which this work was composed, is a wonderful circumstance. Johnson has been heard to say, "I wrote forty-eight of the printed octavo pages of the 'Life of Savage' at a sitting; but then I sat up all night."[1]

He exhibits the genius of Savage to the best advantage, in the specimens of his poetry which he has selected, some of which are of uncommon merit. We, indeed, occasionally find such vigour and such point, as might make us suppose that the generous aid of Johnson had been imparted to his friend. Mr. Thomas Warton made this remark to me; and, in support of it, quoted from the poem entitled "The Bastard," a line in which the fancied superiority of one "Stamped in Nature's mint with ecstacy," is contrasted with a regular lawful descendant of some great and ancient family:

"No tenth transmitter of a foolish face."

But the fact is that this poem was published some years before Johnson and Savage were acquainted.

It is remarkable, that in this biographical disquisition there appears a very strong symptom of Johnson's prejudice against players; a prejudice which may be attributed to the following causes: first, the imperfection of his organs, which were so defective that he was not susceptible of the fine impressions which theatrical excellence produces upon the generality of mankind; secondly, the cold rejection of his tragedy; and, lastly, the brilliant success of Garrick, who had been his pupil, who had come to London at the same time with him, not in a much more prosperous state than himself, and whose talents he undoubtedly rated low, compared with his own. His being outstripped by his pupil in the race of immediate fame, as well as of fortune, probably made him

[1] *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, 3rd edit. p. 35. B. Johnson received fifteen guineas from Cave for the book, which reached a second edition in 1748, a third in 1767, and a fourth in 1769. A French translation was published in 1771. It was included in the *Lives of the Poets*.

feel some indignation, as thinking that whatever might be Garrick's merits in his art, the reward was too great when compared with what the most successful efforts of literary labour could attain. At all periods of his life Johnson used to talk contemptuously of players ; but in this work he speaks of them with peculiar acrimony ; for which, perhaps, there was formerly too much reason from the licentious and dissolute manners of those engaged in that profession. It is but justice to add, that in our own time such a change has taken place, that there is no longer room for such an unfavourable distinction.

His schoolfellow and friend, Dr. Taylor, told me a pleasant anecdote of Johnson's triumphing over his pupil, David Garrick. When that great actor had played some little time at Goodman's Fields, Johnson and Taylor went to see him perform, and afterwards passed the evening at a tavern with him and old Giffard.[1] Johnson, who was ever depreciating stage-players, after censuring some mistakes in emphasis, which Garrick had committed in the course of that night's acting, said, " The players, Sir, have got a kind of rant, with which they run on, without any regard either to accent or emphasis." Both Garrick and Giffard were offended at this sarcasm, and endeavoured to refute it ; upon which Johnson rejoined, " Well now, I'll give you something to speak, with which you are little acquainted, and then we shall see how just my observation is. That shall be the criterion. Let me hear you repeat the ninth Commandment, ' Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.' " Both tried at it, said Dr. Taylor, and both mistook the emphasis, which should be upon *not* and *false witness*.[2] Johnson put them right, and enjoyed his victory with great glee.

[1] Giffard was manager of the theatre in Goodman's Fields, where Garrick made his first appearance in London, October 19, 1741.

[2] I suspect Dr. Taylor was inaccurate in this statement. The emphasis should be equally upon *shalt* and *not*, as both concur to form the negative injunction ; and *false witness*, like the other acts prohibited in the Decalogue, should not be marked by any peculiar emphasis, but only be distinctly enunciated. B.

His "Life of Savage" was no sooner published, than the following liberal praise was given to it, in "The Champion," a periodical paper:

"This pamphlet is, without flattery to its author, as just and well written a piece as of its kind I ever saw; so that at the same time that it highly deserves, it certainly stands very little in need of this recommendation. As to the history of the unfortunate person, whose memoirs compose this work, it is certainly penned with equal accuracy and spirit, of which I am so much the better judge, as I know many of the facts mentioned to be strictly true, and very fairly related. Besides, it is not only the story of Mr. Savage, but innumerable incidents relating to other persons, and other affairs, which renders this a very amusing, and, withal, a very instructive and valuable performance. The author's observations are short, significant, and just, as his narrative is remarkably smooth, and well disposed. His reflections open to all the recesses of the human heart; and, in a word, a more just or pleasant, a more engaging or a more improving treatise, on all the excellences and defects of human nature, is scarce to be found in our own, or perhaps, any other language."[1]

Johnson's partiality for Savage made him entertain no doubt of his story, however extraordinary and improbable. It never occurred to him to question his being the son of the Countess of Macclesfield, of whose unrelenting barbarity he so loudly complained, and the particulars of which are related in so strong and affecting a manner in Johnson's Life of him. Johnson was certainly well warranted in publishing his narrative, however offensive it might be to the lady and her relations, because her alleged unnatural and cruel conduct to her son, and shameful avowal of guilt, were stated in a "Life of Savage" now lying before me, which came out so early as 1727, and no attempt had been made to confute it, or to punish the author or printer as a libeller; but for the honour of human nature, we should be glad to find the shocking

[1] This character or *The Life of Savage* was not written by Fielding, as has been supposed, but most probably by Ralph, who, as appears from the minutes of the Partners of *The Champion* in the possession of Mr. Reed of Staple Inn, succeeded Fielding in his share of the paper, before the date of that eulogium. B.

tale not true; and from a respectable gentleman[1] connected with the lady's family, I have received such information and remarks, as joined to my own inquiries, will, I think, render it at least somewhat doubtful, especially when we consider that it must have originated from the person himself who went by the name of Richard Savage.

If the maxim, *falsum in uno, falsum in omnibus*, were to be received without qualification, the credit of Savage's narrative, as conveyed to us, would be annihilated; for it contains some assertions which, beyond a question, are not true.

1. In order to induce a belief that the Earl Rivers, on account of a criminal connexion with whom, Lady Macclesfield is said to have been divorced from her husband by Act of Parliament,[2] had a peculiar anxiety about the child which she bore to him, it is alleged, that his Lordship gave him his own name, and had it duly recorded in the register of St. Andrew's, Holborn. I have carefully inspected that register, but no such entry is to be found.[3]

[1] The late Francis Cockayne Cust, Esq., one of his Majesty's Counsel. B.

[2] 1697. B.

[3] Boswell is wrong, as appears from the following note contributed to the 3rd edit. by James Bindley, First Commissioner in the Stamp Office: From "the Earl of Macclesfield's Case," which, in 1797-8, was presented to the Lords, in order to procure an act of divorce, it appears, that "Anne, Countess of Macclesfield, under the name of Madam SMITH, in Fox-court, near Brook-street, Holborn, was delivered of a male child by Mrs. Wright, a midwife, on Saturday the 16th of January, 1696-7, at six o'clock in the morning, who was baptized on the Monday following, and registered by the name of RICHARD, the son of John Smith, by Mr. Burbridge, assistant to Dr. Manningham's curate for St. Andrew's, Holborn:" that the child was christened on Monday, the 18th of January, in Fox-court; and, from the privacy, was supposed by Mr. Burbridge to be "a by-blow or bastard." It also appears that during her delivery the lady wore a mask; and that Mary Pegler on the next day after the baptism (Tuesday) took a male-child, whose mother was called Madam Smith, from the house of Mrs. Pheasant, in Fox-court, [running

2. It is stated, that "Lady Macclesfield having lived for some time upon very uneasy terms with her husband, thought a public confession of adultery the most obvious and expeditious method of obtaining her liberty;" and Johnson, assuming this to be true, stigmatises her with indignation, as "The wretch who had, without scruple, proclaimed herself an adultress." But I have perused the Journals of both Houses of Parliament at the period of her divorce, and there find it authentically ascertained, that so far from voluntarily submitting to the ignominious charge of adultery, she made a strenuous defence by her Counsel; the bill having been first moved 15th of January, 1697-8, in the House of Lords, and proceeded on, (with various applications for time to bring up witnesses at a distance, &c.) at intervals till the 3rd of March, when it passed. It was brought to the Commons, by a message from the Lords, the 5th of March, proceeded on the 7th, 10th, 11th, 14th, and 15th, on which day, after a full examination of witnesses on both sides, and hearing of Counsel, it was reported without amendments, passed, and carried to the Lords. That Lady Macclesfield was convicted of the crime of which she was accused, cannot be denied: but the question now is, whether the person calling himself Richard Savage was her son.

It has been said, that when Earl Rivers was dying, and anxious to provide for all his natural children, he was informed by Lady Macclesfield that her son by him was dead. Whether, then, shall we believe that this was a malignant lie, invented by a mother to prevent her own child from receiving the bounty of his father, which was accordingly the consequence, if the person whose life

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from Brook-street into Gray's-Inn-lane,] who went by the name of Mrs. Lee. Conformable to this statement is the entry in the register of St. Andrew's, Holborn, which is as follows, and which unquestionably records the baptism of Richard Savage, to whom Lord Rivers gave his own Christian name, prefixed to the assumed surname of his mother: "Jan^{y}. 1696-7. RICHARD, son of John Smith and Mary, in Fox-court in Gray's-Inn-lane, baptized the 18th."

Johnson wrote was her son; or shall we not rather believe that the person who then assumed the name of Richard Savage was an impostor, being in reality the son of the shoemaker, under whose wife's care Lady Macclesfield's child was placed; that after the death of the real Richard Savage, he attempted to personate him; and that the fraud being known to Lady Macclesfield, he was therefore repulsed by her with just resentment.

There is a strong circumstance in support of the last supposition, though it has been mentioned as an aggravation of Lady Macclesfield's unnatural conduct, and that is, her having prevented him from obtaining the benefit of a legacy left to him by Mrs. Lloyd, his godmother. For if there were such a legacy left, his not being able to obtain payment of it, must be imputed to his consciousness that he was not the real person. The just inference should be, that by the death of Lady Macclesfield's child before its godmother, the legacy became lapsed, and therefore that Johnson's Richard Savage was an impostor.

If he had a title to the legacy, he could not have found any difficulty in recovering it; for had the executors resisted his claim, the whole costs, as well as the legacy, must have been paid by them, if he had been the child to whom it was given.

The talents of Savage, and the mingled fire, rudeness, pride, meanness, and ferocity of his character,[1] concur in making it credible that he was fit to plan and carry on an ambitious and daring scheme of imposture, similar instances

[1] Johnson's companion appears to have persuaded that lofty-minded man, that he resembled him in having a noble pride; for Johnson, after painting in strong colours the quarrel between Lord Tyrconnel and Savage, asserts that "The spirit of Mr. Savage, indeed, never suffered him to solicit a reconciliation: he returned reproach for reproach, and insult for insult." But the respectable gentleman to whom I have alluded, has in his possession a letter from Savage, after Lord Tyrconnel had discarded him, addressed to the Reverend Mr. Gilbert, his Lordship's Chaplain, in which he requests him in the humblest manner, to represent his case to the Viscount. B.

of which have not been wanting in higher spheres, in the history of different countries, and have had a considerable degree of success.

Yet, on the other hand, to the companion of Johnson, (who, through whatever medium he was conveyed into this world,—be it ever so doubtful "To whom related, or by whom begot," was, unquestionably, a man of no common endowments,) we must allow the weight of general repute as to his *Status* or parentage, though illicit; and supposing him to be an impostor, it seems strange that Lord Tyrconnel, the nephew of Lady Macclesfield, should patronise him, and even admit him as a guest in his family.[1] Lastly, it must ever appear very suspicious, that three different accounts of the Life of Richard Savage, one published in "The Plain Dealer," in 1724, another in 1727, and another by the powerful pen of Johnson, in 1744, and all of them while Lady Macclesfield was alive, should, notwithstanding the severe attacks upon her, have been suffered to pass without any public and effectual contradiction.

[1] Trusting to Savage's information, Johnson represents this unhappy man's being received as a companion by Lord Tyrconnel, and pensioned by his Lordship, as posterior to Savage's conviction and pardon. But I am assured, that Savage had received the voluntary bounty of Lord Tyrconnel, and had been dismissed by him long before the murder was committed, and that his Lordship was very instrumental in procuring Savage's pardon, by his intercession with the Queen, through Lady Hertford. If, therefore, he had been desirous of preventing the publication by Savage, he would have left him to his fate. Indeed I must observe, that although Johnson mentions that Lord Tyrconnel's patronage of Savage was "upon his promise to lay aside his design of exposing the cruelty of his mother," the great biographer has forgotten that he himself has mentioned, that Savage's story had been told several years before in *The Plain Dealer;* from which he quotes this strong saying of the generous Sir Richard Steele, that the "inhumanity of his mother had given him a right to find every good man his father." At the same time it must be acknowledged, that the Lady Macclesfield and her relations might still wish that her story should not be brought into more conspicuous notice by the satirical pen of Savage. B.

I have thus endeavoured to sum up the evidence upon the case, as fairly as I can; and the result seems to be, that the world must vibrate in a state of uncertainty as to what was the truth.

This digression, I trust, will not be censured, as it relates to a matter exceedingly curious, and very intimately connected with Johnson, both as a man and an author.[1]

He this year wrote the "Preface to the Harleian Miscellany." * The selection of the pamphlets of which it was composed was made by Mr. Oldys,[2] a man of eager curiosity, and indefatigable diligence, who first exerted that spirit of inquiry into the literature of the old English writers, by which the works of our great dramatic poet have of late been so signally illustrated.

In 1745 he published a pamphlet entitled, "Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth, with Remarks on Sir T. H.'s (Sir Thomas Hanmer's) Edition

[1] Miss Mason, after having forfeited the title of Lady Macclesfield by divorce, was married to Colonel Brett, and, it is said, was well known in all the polite circles. Colley Cibber, I am informed, had so high an opinion of her taste and judgment as to genteel life and manners, that he submitted every scene of his *Careless Husband* to Mrs. Brett's revisal and correction. Colonel Brett was reported to be too free in his gallantry with his Lady's maid. Mrs. Brett came into a room one day in her own house, and found the Colonel and her maid both fast asleep in two chairs. She tied a white handkerchief round her husband's neck, which was a sufficient proof that she had discovered his intrigue; but she never at any time took notice of it to him. This incident, as I am told, gave occasion to the well-wrought scene of Sir Charles and Lady Easy and Edging. B.

[2] William Oldys (1696—1761) drank as hard as he worked, and he worked very hard. Besides editing the *Harleian Miscellany*, he wrote a Life of Raleigh (to which Gibbon, when meditating the subject, found himself able to add nothing of importance), a Compendious Review of all Unpublished and Valuable Books in all Sciences, translated Camden's *Britannia*, and did an infinity of hack-work for the booksellers. He is described as an honest and good-tempered man, but very fond of low company.

of Shakespeare."*[1] To which he affixed, proposals for a new edition of that poet.

As we do not trace any thing else published by him during the course of this year, we may conjecture that he was occupied entirely with that work. But the little encouragement which was given by the public to his anonymous proposals for the execution of a task which Warburton was known to have undertaken, probably damped his ardour. His pamphlet, however, was highly esteemed, and was fortunate enough to obtain the approbation even of the supercilious Warburton himself, who, in the Preface to his Shakespeare published two years afterwards, thus mentioned it: "As to all those things which have been published under the titles of *Essays*, *Remarks*, *Observations*, &c., on Shakespeare, if you except some Critical Notes on Macbeth, given as a specimen of a projected edition, and written, as appears, by a man of parts and genius, the rest are absolutely below a serious notice."

Of this flattering distinction shewn to him by Warburton, a very grateful remembrance was ever entertained by Johnson, who said, "He praised me at a time when praise was of value to me."

In 1746 it is probable that he was still employed upon his Shakespeare, which perhaps he laid aside for a time, upon account of the high expectations which were formed of Warburton's edition of that great poet. It is somewhat curious, that his literary career appears to have been almost totally suspended in the years 1745 and 1746, those years which were marked by a civil war in Great Britain, when a rash attempt was made to restore the House of Stuart to the throne. That he had a tenderness for that unfortunate House, is well known; and some may fancifully imagine, that a sympathetic anxiety impeded the exertion of his intellectual powers: but I am inclined to think, that he was, during this time, sketching the outlines of his great philological work.

[1] Sir Thomas Hanmer (1676—1746) was Speaker of the House of Commons in Queen Anne's last Parliament. His Shakespeare was published in 1744, in six volumes quarto.

None of his letters during those years are extant, so far as I can discover. This is much to be regretted. It might afford some entertainment to see how he then expressed himself to his private friends concerning State affairs. Dr. Adams informs me, that "At this time a favourite object which he had in contemplation was 'The Life of Alfred'; in which, from the warmth with which he spoke about it, he would, I believe, had he been master of his own will, have engaged himself, rather than on any other subject.

In 1747 it is supposed that the "Gentleman's Magazine" for May was enriched by him with five short poetical pieces, distinguished by three asterisks. The first is a translation, or rather a paraphrase, of a Latin Epitaph on Sir Thomas Hanmer. Whether the Latin was his, or not, I have never heard, though I should think it probably was, if it be certain that he wrote the English; as to which my only cause of doubt is, that his slighting character of Hanmer as an editor, in his "Observations on Macbeth," is very different from that in the Epitaph. It may be said, that there is the same contrariety between the character in the Observations, and that in his own Preface to Shakespeare; but a considerable time elapsed between the one publication and the other, whereas the Observations and the Epitaph came close together. The others are, "To Miss ——, on her giving the Author a gold and silk net-work Purse of her own weaving"; "Stella in Mourning"; "The Winter's Walk"; "An Ode"; and, "To Lyce, an elderly Lady." I am not positive that all these were his productions;[1] but as "The Winter's Walk" has never been controverted to be his, and all of them have the same mark, it is reasonable to conclude that they are all written by the same hand. Yet to the Ode, in which we find a passage very characteristic of him, being a learned description of the gout,

[1] Malone thought some of them might be Hawkesworth's. Croker was certain that none of them were Johnson's, and later editors seem to agree with him.

"Unhappy, whom to beds of pain
Arthritick tyranny consigns;"

there is the following note, "The author being ill of the gout:" but Johnson was not attacked with that distemper till a very late period of his life. May not this, however, be a poetical fiction? Why may not a poet suppose himself to have the gout as well as suppose himself to be in love, of which we have innumerable instances, and which has been admirably ridiculed by Johnson in his "Life of Cowley"? I have also some difficulty to believe that he could produce such a group of *conceits* as appear in the verses to Lyce, in which he claims for this ancient personage as good a right to be assimilated to *heaven*, as nymphs whom other poets have flattered; he therefore ironically ascribes to her the attributes of the *sky*, in such stanzas as this:

"Her teeth the *night* with *darkness* dies,
She's *starr'd* with pimples o'er;
Her tongue like nimble *lightning* plies,
And can with *thunder* roar."

But as at a very advanced age he could condescend to trifle in *namby-pamby* rhymes, to please Mrs. Thrale, and her daughter, he may have, in his earlier years, composed such a piece as this.

It is remarkable, that in this first edition of "The Winter's Walk," the concluding line is much more Johnsonian than it was afterwards printed; for in subsequent editions, after praying Stella to "snatch him to her arms," he says,

"And *shield* me from the *ills* of life."

Whereas in the first edition it is

"And *hide* me from the *sight* of life."

A horror at life in general is more consonant with Johnson's habitual gloomy cast of thought.

I have heard him repeat with great energy the following verses, which appeared in the "Gentleman's Magazine"

for April this year; but I have no authority to say they were his own. Indeed one of the best critics of our age suggests to me, that "the word *indifferently* being used in the sense of *without concern*, and being also very unpoetical, renders it improbable that they should have been his composition":

"*On Lord* LOVAT'S *Execution.*

"Pity'd by *gentle minds* KILMARNOCK died;
The *brave*, BALMERINO, were on thy side;
RADCLIFFE, unhappy in his crimes of youth,
Steady in what he still mistook for truth,
Beheld his death so decently unmov'd,
The *soft* lamented, and the *brave* approv'd.
But LOVAT'S end indifferently we view,
True to no *King*, to no *religion* true:
No *fair* forgets the *ruin* he has done;
No *child* laments the *tyrant* of his *son*;
No *Tory* pities, thinking what he was;
No *Whig* compassions, *for he left the cause*;
The *brave* regret not, for he was not brave;
The *honest* mourn not, knowing him a knave!"[1]

This year his old pupil and friend, David Garrick, having become joint patentee and manager of Drury-lane theatre, Johnson honoured his opening of it with a Prologue,* which for just and manly dramatic criticism on the whole range of the English stage, as well as for poetical

[1] These verses are somewhat too severe on the extraordinary person who is the chief figure in them; for he was undoubtedly brave. His pleasantry during his solemn trial (in which, by the way, I have heard Mr. David Hume observe, that we have one of the very few speeches of Mr. Murray, now Earl of Mansfield, authentically given) was very remarkable. When asked if he had any questions to put to Sir Everard Fawkener, who was one of the strongest witnesses against him, he answered, "I only wish him joy of his young wife." And after sentence of death, in the horrible terms in such cases of treason, was pronounced upon him, and he was retiring from the bar, he said, "Fare you well, my Lords, we shall not all meet again in one place." He behaved with perfect composure at his execution, and called out "*Dulce et decorum est pro patriâ mori.*" B.

excellence,[1] is unrivalled. Like the celebrated Epilogue to the "Distressed Mother,"[2] it was, during the season, often called for by the audience. The most striking and brilliant passages of it have been so often repeated, and are so well recollected by all the lovers of the drama, and of poetry, that it would be superfluous to point them out. In the "Gentleman's Magazine" for December this year, he inserted an "Ode on Winter," which is, I think, an admirable specimen of his genius for lyric poetry.

But the year 1747 is distinguished as the epoch, when Johnson's arduous and important work, his DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, was announced to the world, by the publication of its "Plan" or "Prospectus."

How long this immense undertaking had been the object of his contemplation, I do not know. I once asked him by what means he had attained to that astonishing knowledge of our language, by which he was enabled to realise a design of such extent and accumulated difficulty.

He told me, that "It was not the effect of particular study; but that it had grown up in his mind insensibly." I have been informed by Mr. James Dodsley, that several years before this period, when Johnson was one day sitting in his brother Robert's shop, he heard his brother suggest to him that a Dictionary of the English Language would

[1] My friend Mr. Courtenay, whose eulogy on Johnson's Latin Poetry has been inserted in this Work, is no less happy in praising his English Poetry:

> But hark, he sings! the strain e'en Pope admires;
> Indignant virtue her own bard inspires.
> Sublime as Juvenal he pours his lays,
> And with the Roman shares congenial praise;—
> In glowing numbers now he fires the age,
> And Shakespeare's sun relumes the clouded stage. B.

[2] The epilogue, which was spoken by Mrs. Oldfield, was encored on the first three nights of the play, and continued throughout its run. It was commonly attributed to Budgel, but Addison, if he did not write it, undoubtedly licked it into shape. See *The Spectator* (341), Hurd's edition of Addison's Works (Bohn, vol. v. 228) and *Lives of the Poets* ("Ambrose Philips").

be a work that would be well received by the public; that Johnson seemed at first to catch at the proposition, but, after a pause, said, in his abrupt decisive manner, "I believe I shall not undertake it." That he, however, had bestowed much thought upon the subject, before he published his "Plan," is evident from the enlarged, clear, and accurate views which it exhibits; and we find him mentioning in that tract, that many of the writers whose testimonies were to be produced as authorities, were selected by Pope; which proves that he had been furnished, probably by Mr. Robert Dodsley, with whatever hints that eminent poet had contributed towards a great literary project, that had been the subject of important consideration in a former reign.

The booksellers who contracted with Johnson, single and unaided, for the execution of a work, which in other countries has not been effected but by the co-operating exertions of many, were Mr. Robert Dodsley, Mr. Charles Hitch, Mr. Andrew Millar, the two Messieurs Longman, and the two Messieurs Knapton. The price stipulated was 1,575*l.*

The "Plan" was addressed to Philip Dormer, Earl of Chesterfield, then one of his Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State; a nobleman who was very ambitious of literary distinction, and who, upon being informed of the design, had expressed himself in terms very favourable to its success. There is, perhaps in every thing of any consequence, a secret history which it would be amusing to know, could we have it authentically communicated. Johnson told me,[1] "Sir, the way in which the plan of my Dictionary came to be inscribed to Lord Chesterfield, was this: I had neglected to write it by the time appointed. Dodsley suggested a desire to have it addressed to Lord Chesterfield. I laid hold of this as a pretext for delay, that it might be better done, and let Dodsley have his desire. I said to my friend, Dr. Bathurst, 'Now if any good comes of my addressing to Lord Chesterfield, it will

[1] September 22, 1777, going from Ashbourne in Derbyshire, to see Islam. B.

be ascribed to deep policy, when, in fact, it was only a casual excuse for laziness.'"

It is worthy of observation, that the "Plan" has not only the substantial merit of comprehension, perspicuity, and precision, but that the language of it is unexceptionally excellent; it being altogether free from that inflation of style, and those uncommon but apt and energetic words, which in some of his writings have been censured, with more petulance than justice; and never was there a more dignified strain of compliment than that in which he courts the attention of one who, he had been persuaded to believe, would be a respectable patron.

"With regard to question of purity or propriety (says he), I was once in doubt whether I should not attribute to myself too much in attempting to decide them, and whether my province was to extend beyond the proposition of the question, and the display of the suffrages on each side; but I have been since determined by your Lordship's opinion, to interpose my own judgment, and shall therefore endeavour to support what appears to me most consonant to grammar and reason. Ausonius thought that modesty forbade him to plead inability for a task to which Cæsar had judged him equal:

Cur me posse negem, posse quod ille putat? [1]

And I may hope, my Lord, that since you, whose authority in our language is so generally acknowledged, have commissioned me to declare my own opinion, I shall be considered as exercising a kind of vicarious jurisdiction; and that the power which might have been denied to my own claim, will be readily allowed me as the delegate of your Lordship."

This passage proves, that Johnson's addressing his "Plan" to Lord Chesterfield was not merely in consequence of the result of a report by means of Dodsley, that the Earl favoured the design; but that there had been a particular communication with his Lordship concerning it. Dr. Taylor told me, that Johnson sent his "Plan" to him in manuscript, for his perusal; and that when it

[1] Ausonius Theodosio Augusto, v. 12. B.

was lying upon his table, Mr. William Whitehead[1] happened to pay him a visit, and being shewn it, was highly pleased with such parts of it as he had time to read, and begged to take it home with him, which he was allowed to do; that from him it got into the hands of a noble Lord, who carried it to Lord Chesterfield. When Taylor observed this might be an advantage, Johnson replied, "No, Sir, it would have come out with more bloom, if it had not been seen before by any body."[2]

The opinion conceived of it by another noble author, appears from the following extract of a letter from the Earl of Orrery[3] to Dr. Birch:

"Caledon, Dec. 30, 1747.

"I have just now seen the specimen of Mr. Johnson's Dictionary, addressed to Lord Chesterfield. I am much pleased with the plan, and I think the specimen is one of the best that I have ever read. Most specimens disgust, rather than prejudice us in favour of the work to follow; but the language of Mr. Johnson's is good, and the arguments are properly and modestly expressed. However, some expressions may be cavilled at, but they are trifles. I'll mention one: the *barren* Laurel. The laurel is not barren, in any sense whatever; it bears fruits and flowers. *Sed hæ sunt nugæ*, and I have great expectations from the performance."[4]

That he was fully aware of the arduous nature of the undertaking, he acknowledges; and shows himself perfectly sensible of it in the conclusion of his "Plan"; but

[1] William Whitehead (1715—85), no relation to Paul, succeeded Colley Cibber as Poet Laureate in 1757.

[2] Croker saw a draft of the *Plan* not written by Johnson but signed by him, which contains some suggestions in Chesterfield's hand and some in another, all of which were adopted by him.

[3] John Boyle (1707—1762), educated at Westminster and Oxford, succeeded his father as fifth Earl of Orrery in 1737, and his cousin as fifth Earl of Cork in 1753. He is remembered only for his *Life of Swift*, which has probably never been read since Scott's was published; and for Berkeley's sarcasm on him, "He would have been a man of genius had he known how to set about it."

[4] Birch MSS. Brit. Mus. 4303. B.

he had a noble consciousness of his own abilities, which enabled him to go on with undaunted spirit.

Dr. Adams found him one day busy at his Dictionary, when the following dialogue ensued. "ADAMS: This is a great work, Sir. How are you to get all the etymologies? JOHNSON: Why, Sir, here is a shelf with Junius, and Skinner,[1] and others; and there is a Welsh gentleman who has published a collection of Welsh proverbs, who will help me with the Welsh.[2] ADAMS: But, Sir, how can you do this in three years? JOHNSON: Sir, I have no doubt that I can do it in three years. ADAMS: But the French Academy, which consists of forty members, took forty years to compile their Dictionary. JOHNSON: Sir, thus it is. This is the proportion. Let me see; forty times forty is sixteen hundred. As three to sixteen hundred, so is the proportion of an Englishman to a Frenchman." With so much ease and pleasantry could he talk of that prodigious labour which he had undertaken to execute.

The public has had, from another pen,[3] a long detail of what had been done in this country by prior Lexicographers; and no doubt Johnson was wise to avail himself of them, so far as they went: but the learned, yet judicious research of etymology, the various, yet accurate display of definition, and the rich collection of authorities, were reserved for the superior mind of our great philologist. For the mechanical part he employed, as he told me, six amanuenses; and let it be remembered by the natives of North Britain, to whom he is supposed to have been so hostile, that five of them were of that country. There were two Messieurs Macbean; Mr. Shiels, who we

[1] Francis Junius was born at Heidelberg in 1589 and died at Windsor in 1678; but his *Etymologicum Anglicanum* was not published till 1743. Dr. Stephen Skinner's *Etymologicon Linguæ Anglicanæ* was published in 1671, four years after his death.

[2] Supposed by Dr. Hill to have been Thomas Richards, who published in 1753 *Antiquæ Linguæ Britannicæ Thesaurus* with a Welsh Grammar and a collection of British proverbs.

[3] See Sir John Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*. B.

shall hereafter see partly wrote the "Lives of the Poets" to which the name of Cibber is affixed;[1] Mr. Stewart, son of Mr. George Stewart, bookseller at Edinburgh; and a Mr. Maitland. The sixth of these humble assistants was Mr. Peyton, who, I believe, taught French, and published some elementary tracts.

To all these painful labourers, Johnson shewed a never-ceasing kindness, so far as they stood in need of it. The elder Mr. Macbean had afterwards the honour of being Librarian to Archibald, Duke of Argyle, for many years, but was left without a shilling. Johnson wrote for him a Preface to, "A System of Ancient Geography"; and, by the favour of Lord Thurlow, got him admitted a poor brother of the Charterhouse. For Shiels, who died of a consumption, he had much tenderness; and it has been thought that some choice sentences in the "Lives of the Poets" were supplied by him. Peyton, when reduced to penury, had frequent aid from the bounty of Johnson, who at last was at the expense of burying him and his wife.

While the Dictionary was going forward, Johnson lived part of the time in Holborn, part in Gough-square, Fleet-street; and he had an upper room fitted up like a counting-house for the purpose, in which he gave to the copyists their several tasks. The words, partly taken from other dictionaries, and partly supplied by himself, having been first written down with spaces left between them, he delivered in writing their etymologies, definitions, and various significations. The authorities were copied from the books themselves, in which he had marked the passages with a black-lead pencil, the traces of which could easily be effaced. I have seen several of them, in which that trouble had not been taken; so that they were just as when used by the copyists. It is remarkable, that he was so attentive in the choice of the passages in which words are authorized, that one may read page after page of his Dictionary with improvement and pleasure; and it

[1] See under April 10, 1776. B.

should not pass unobserved, that he has quoted no author whose writings had a tendency to hurt sound religion and morality.[1]

The necessary expense of preparing a work of such magnitude for the press, must have been a considerable deduction from the price stipulated to be paid for the copyright. I understand that nothing was allowed by the booksellers on that account; and I remember his telling me, that a large portion of it having, by mistake, been written upon both sides of the paper, so as to be inconvenient for the compositor, it cost him twenty pounds to have it transcribed upon one side only.

He is now to be considered as "tugging at his oar," as engaged in a steady continued course of occupation, sufficient to employ all his time for some years; and which was the best preventive of that constitutional melancholy which was ever lurking about him, ready to trouble his quiet. But his enlarged and lively mind could not be satisfied without more diversity of employment, and the pleasure of animated relaxation.[2] He therefore

[1] Bishop Percy has corrected and supplemented this account with the following details from Johnson's own lips. "He began his task by devoting his first care to a diligent perusal of all such English writers as were most correct in their language, and under every sentence which he meant to quote he drew a line, and noted in the margin the first letter of the word under which it was to occur. He then delivered these books to his clerks, who transcribed each sentence on a separate slip of paper, and arranged the same under the word referred to. By these means he collected the several words and their different significations; and when the whole arrangement was alphabetically formed, he gave the definitions of their meanings, and collected their etymologies from Skinner, Junius, and other writers on the subject." It would not be difficult to find some quotations from authors whose writings were not conducive to the highest morality; on the other hand he would not quote Dr. Clarke, whom he greatly admired, because he was not orthodox on the Trinity

[2] In this summer, (says Malone) he first visited Tunbridge Wells, probably on account of his wife's health as well as for his own. In the well-known print representing some of the principal visitors to the Wells at this time (published as the frontispiece to

not only exerted his talents in occasional composition, very different from Lexicography, but formed a club in Ivy-lane, Paternoster-row, with a view to enjoy literary discussion, and amuse his evening hours. The members associated with him in this little society were his beloved friend Dr. Richard Bathurst, Mr. Hawkesworth, afterwards well known by his writings, Mr. John Hawkins, an attorney,[1] and a few others of different professions.

In the "Gentleman's Magazine" for May of this year he wrote a "Life of Roscommon,"* with notes; which he afterwards much improved, (indenting the notes into text,) and inserted amongst his "Lives of the English Poets."

Mr. Dodsley this year brought out his PRECEPTOR, one of the most valuable books for the improvement of young minds that has appeared in any language; and to this meritorious work Johnson furnished "The Preface," * containing a general sketch of the book, with a short and perspicuous recommendation of each article; as also, "The Vision of Theodore, the Hermit, found in his Cell," * a most beautiful allegory of human life, under the figure of ascending the mountain of Existence. The Bishop of Dromore heard Dr. Johnson say, that he thought this was the best thing he ever wrote.[2]

In January, 1749, he published "THE VANITY OF HUMAN WISHES, being the Tenth Satire of Juvenal

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Vol. III. of Richardson's *Correspondence*) Johnson's is the most conspicuous figure.

[1] He was afterwards for several years Chairman of the Middlesex Justices, and upon occasion of presenting an address to the King, accepted the usual offer of Knighthood. He is author of *A History of Music*, in five volumes in quarto. By assiduous attendance upon Johnson in his last illness, he obtained the office of one of his executors; in consequence of which, the booksellers of London employed him to publish an edition of Dr. Johnson's works, and to write his Life. B. The Club met every Tuesday evening at the King's Head, a famous house for beefsteaks. See Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, pp. 219—60.

[2] The Bishop also said that it was composed in a single night, after Johnson had finished an evening at Holborn.

imitated." * He, I believe, composed it the preceding year.[1] Mrs. Johnson, for the sake of country air, had lodgings at Hampstead, to which he resorted occasionally, and there the greatest part, if not the whole, of this Imitation was written. The fervid rapidity with which it was produced, is scarcely credible. I have heard him say, that he composed seventy lines of it in one day, without putting one of them upon paper till they were finished. I remember when I once regretted to him that he had not given us more of Juvenal's Satires, he said he probably should give more, for he had them all in his head ; by which I understood, that he had the originals and correspondent allusions floating in his mind, which he could, when he pleased, embody and render permanent without much labour. Some of them, however, he observed were too gross for imitation.

The profits of a single poem, however excellent, appear to have been very small in the last reign, compared with what a publication of the same size has since been known to yield. I have mentioned upon Johnson's own authority, that for his "LONDON" he had only ten guineas ; and now, after his fame was established, he got for his "Vanity of Human Wishes" but five guineas more, as is proved by an authentic document in my possession.[2]

It will be observed, that he reserves to himself the right of printing one edition of this satire, which was his practice upon occasion of the sale of all his writings ; it being his fixed intention to publish at some period, for his own profit, a complete collection of his works.

[1] Sir John Hawkins, with solemn inaccuracy, represents this poem as a consequence of the indifferent reception of his tragedy. But the fact is, that the poem was published on the 9th of January, and the tragedy was not acted till the 6th of February following. B.

[2] "Nov. 25, 1748, I received of Mr. Dodsley fifteen guineas, for which I assign to him the right of copy of an Imitation of the Tenth Satire of Juvenal, written by me ; reserving to myself the right of printing one edition. SAM. JOHNSON. London, 29 June, 1786." "A true copy, from the original in Dr. Johnson's handwriting. JAS. DODSLEY." B.

His "Vanity of Human Wishes" has less of common life, but more of a philosophic dignity than his "London." More readers, therefore, will be delighted with the pointed spirit of "London," than with the profound reflection of "The Vanity of Human Wishes." Garrick, for instance, observed in his sprightly manner, with more vivacity than regard to just discrimination, as is usual with wits, "When Johnson lived much with the Herveys, and saw a good deal of what was passing in life, he wrote his 'London,' which is lively and easy. When he became more retired he gave us his 'Vanity of Human Wishes,' which is as hard as Greek. Had he gone on to imitate another satire, it would have been as hard as Hebrew." [1]

But "The Vanity of Human Wishes" is, in the opinion of the best judges, as high an effort of ethic poetry as any language can shew. The instances of variety of disappointment are chosen so judiciously, and painted so strongly, that, the moment they are read, they bring conviction to every thinking mind. That of the scholar must have depressed the too sanguine expectations of many an ambitious student.[2] That of the warrior, Charles of

[1] From Mr. Langton. B.

[2] In this poem one of the instances mentioned of unfortunate learned men is *Lydiat:*

"Hear Lydiat's life, and Galileo's end."

The history of Lydiat being little known, the following account of him may be acceptable to many of my readers. It appeared as a note in the Supplement to the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1748, in which some passages extracted from Johnson's poem were inserted, and it should have been added in the subsequent editions.—"A very learned divine and mathematician, fellow of New College, Oxon, and rector of Okerton near Banbury. He wrote, among many others, a Latin treatise, '*De Natura Cœli*,' &c., in which he attacked the sentiments of Scaliger and Aristotle, not bearing to hear it urged, *that some things are true in philosophy and false in divinity*. He made above six hundred sermons on the harmony of the Evangelists. Being unsuccessful in publishing his works, he lay in the prison of Bocardo at Oxford, and in the King's Bench, till Bishop Usher, Dr. Laud, Sir William Boswell, and Dr. Pink, released him by paying his debts. He petitioned King Charles I. to be sent into Ethiopia, &c. to procure MSS.

Sweden, is, I think, as highly finished a picture as possibly can be conceived.

Were all the other excellences of this poem annihilated, it must ever have our grateful reverence from its noble conclusion ; in which we are consoled with the assurance that happiness may be attained, if we " apply our hearts " to piety :

> " Where then shall Hope and Fear their objects find ?
> Must dull suspense corrupt the stagnant mind ?
> Must helpless man, in ignorance sedate,
> Roll darkling down the torrent of his fate ?
> Must no dislike alarm, no wishes rise,
> No cries invoke the mercy of the skies ?
> Inquirer, cease ; petitions yet remain
> Which Heaven may hear, nor deem Religion vain.
> Still raise for good the supplicating voice,
> But leave to Heaven the measure and the choice.
> Safe in His power, whose eye discerns afar
> The secret ambush of a specious prayer ;
> Implore his aid, in his decisions rest,
> Secure, whate'er he gives, he gives the best.
> Yet when the sense of sacred presence fires,
> And strong devotion to the skies aspires,
> Pour forth thy fervours for a healthful mind,
> Obedient passions, and a will resign'd ;
> For love, which scarce collective man can fill ;
> For patience, sovereign o'er transmuted ill ;
> For faith, that, panting for a happier seat,
> Counts death kind Nature's signal of retreat :
> These goods for man the laws of Heaven ordain,
> These goods he grants, who grants the power to gain ;
> With these celestial Wisdom calms the mind,
> And makes the happiness she does not find."

Having spoken in favour of monarchy and bishops, he was plundered by the Parliament forces, and twice carried away prisoner from his rectory ; and afterwards had not a shirt to shift him in three months, without he borrowed it, and died very poor in 1646." B. Sir Walter Scott told James Ballantyne that he derived more pleasure from reading *London* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes* than any other poetical composition he could mention. Lockhart adds that the last line of MS. that Scott sent to the press, was a quotation from the latter poem. See also Byron's *Life and Works*, v. 66.

Garrick being now vested with theatrical power by being manager of Drury-lane theatre, he kindly and generously made use of it to bring out Johnson's tragedy, which had been long kept back for want of encouragement. But in this benevolent purpose he met with no small difficulty from the temper of Johnson, which could not brook that a drama which he had formed with much study, and had been obliged to keep more than the nine years of Horace, should be revised and altered at the pleasure of an actor. Yet Garrick knew well, that without some alterations it would not be fit for the stage. A violent dispute having ensued between them, Garrick applied to the Reverend Dr. Taylor to interpose. Johnson was at first very obstinate. "Sir," said he, "the fellow wants me to make Mahomet run mad, that he may have an opportunity of tossing his hands and kicking his heels."[1] He was, however, at last, with difficulty, prevailed on to comply with Garrick's wishes, so as to allow of some changes; but still there were not enough.

Dr. Adams was present the first night of the representation of "IRENE," and gave me the following account: "Before the curtain drew up, there were catcalls and whistling, which alarmed Johnson's friends. The Prologue, which was written by himself in a manly strain, soothed the audience,[2] and the play went off tolerably, till

[1] Mahomet was in fact played by Mr. Barry, and Demetrius by Mr. Garrick: but probably at this time the parts were not yet cast. B.

[2] The expression used by Dr. Adams was "soothed." I should rather think the audience was *awed* by the extraordinary spirit and dignity of the following lines:

"Be this at least his praise, be this his pride;
To force applause no modern arts are tried.
Should partial catcalls all his hopes confound,
He bids no trumpet quell the fatal sound.
Should welcome sleep relieve the weary wit,
He rolls no thunders o'er the drowsy pit.
No snares to captivate the judgment spreads,
Nor bribes your eyes to prejudice your heads.

it came to the conclusion, when Mrs. Pritchard, the Heroine of the piece, was to be strangled upon the stage, and was to speak two lines with the bow-string round her neck. The audience cried out '*Murder! Murder!*' She several times attempted to speak; but in vain. At last she was obliged to go off the stage alive." This passage was afterwards struck out, and she was carried off to be put to death behind the scenes, as the play now has it. The Epilogue, as Johnson informed me, was written by Sir William Yonge.[1] I know not how his play came to be thus graced by the pen of a person then so eminent in the political world.

Notwithstanding all the support of such performers as Garrick, Barry, Mrs. Cibber, Mrs. Pritchard, and every advantage of dress and decoration, the tragedy of "Irene" did not please the public. Mr. Garrick's zeal carried it through for nine nights, so that the author had his three nights' profits; and from a receipt signed by him, now in the hands of Mr. James Dodsley, it appears that his friend, Mr. Robert Dodsley, gave him 100*l.* for the copy, with his usual reservation of the right of one edition.[2]

"IRENE," considered as a poem, is entitled to the praise of superior excellence. Analysed into parts, it will furnish a rich store of noble sentiments, fine imagery, and beautiful language: but it is deficient in pathos, in that delicate power of touching the human feelings, which is the principal end of the drama.[3] Indeed Garrick has complained

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Unmov'd, though witlings sneer and rivals rail,
Studious to please, yet not asham'd to fail.
He scorns the meek address, the suppliant strain,
With merit needless, and without it vain.
In Reason, Nature, Truth, he dares to trust:
Ye fops, be silent; and ye wits, be just! B.

[1] Sir William Yonge was Secretary at War in Walpole's administration. He is said to have been a good speaker; to judge by this Epilogue he was certainly not a good writer.

[2] Including this sum Johnson's receipts appear to have amounted altogether to 295*l.* 17*s.*

[3] Aaron Hill (Vol. II. p. 355), in a letter to Mr. Mallet, gives

to me, that Johnson not only had not the faculty of producing the impressions of tragedy, but that he had not the sensibility to perceive them. His great friend Mr. Walmsley's prediction, that he would "turn out a fine tragedy writer," was, therefore, ill-founded. Johnson was wise enough to be convinced that he had not the talents necessary to write successfully for the stage, and never made another attempt in that species of composition.

When asked how he felt upon the ill-success of his tragedy, he replied, "Like the Monument;" meaning that he continued firm and unmoved as that column. And let it be remembered, as an admonition to the *genus irritabile* of dramatic writers, that this great man, instead of peevishly complaining of the bad taste of the town, submitted to its decision without a murmur. He had indeed, upon all occasions a great deference for the general opinion: "A man," said he, "who writes a book, thinks himself wiser or wittier than the rest of mankind; he supposes that he can instruct or amuse them, and the public to whom he appeals must, after all, be the judges of his pretensions."

On occasion of this play being brought upon the stage, Johnson had a fancy that as a dramatic author his dress should be more gay than what he ordinarily wore; he therefore appeared behind the scenes, and even in one of the side boxes, in a scarlet waistcoat, with rich gold lace, and a gold-laced hat. He humorously observed to Mr. Langton, "That when in that dress he could not treat people with the same ease as when in his usual plain clothes." Dress indeed, we must allow, has more effect even upon strong minds than one should suppose, without having had the experience of it. His necessary attendance while his play was in rehearsal, and during its performance, brought him acquainted with many of the performers of both sexes, which produced a more favourable opinion of

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the following account of *Irene* after having seen it: "I was at the anomalous Mr. Johnson's benefit, and found the play his proper representative; strong sense ungraced by sweetness or decorum." B.

their profession than he had harshly expressed in his "Life of Savage." With some of them he kept up an acquaintance as long as he and they lived, and was ever ready to shew them acts of kindness. He for a considerable time used to frequent the *Green-Room*, and seemed to take delight in dissipating his gloom, by mixing in the sprightly chit-chat of the motley circle then to be found there. Mr. David Hume related to me from Mr. Garrick, that Johnson at last denied himself this amusement, from considerations of rigid virtue, saying, "I'll come no more behind your scenes, David; for the silk stockings and white bosoms of your actresses excite my amorous propensities."

In 1750 he came forth in the character for which he was eminently qualified, a majestic teacher of moral and religious wisdom. The vehicle which he chose was that of a periodical paper, which he knew had been, upon former occasions, employed with great success. The "Tatler," "Spectator," and "Guardian," were the last of the kind published in England which had stood the test of a long trial; and such an interval had now elapsed since their publication, as made him justly think that, to many of his readers, this form of instruction would, in some degree, have the advantage of novelty. A few days before the first of his Essays came out, there started another competitor for fame in the same form, under the title of "The Tatler Revived," which I believe was "born but to die." Johnson was, I think, not very happy in the choice of his title "The Rambler"; which certainly is not suited to a series of grave and moral discourses; which the Italians have literally, but ludicrously, translated by *Il Vagabondo;* and which has been lately assumed as the denomination of a vehicle of licentious tales, "The Rambler's Magazine." He gave Sir Joshua Reynolds the following account of its getting this name: "What *must* be done, Sir, *will* be done. When I was to begin publishing that paper, I was at a loss how to name it. I sat down at night upon my bedside, and resolved that I would not go to sleep till I had fixed its title. The

'Rambler' seemed the best that occurred, and I took it." [1]

With what devout and conscientious sentiments this paper was undertaken, is evidenced by the following prayer, which he composed and offered up on the occasion.

"Almighty God, the giver of all good things, without whose help all labour is ineffectual, and without whose grace all wisdom is folly: grant, I beseech Thee, that in this my undertaking thy Holy Spirit may not be withheld from me, but that I may promote thy glory, and the salvation both of myself and others: grant this, O Lord, for the sake of thy son, Jesus Christ. Amen." (*Prayers and Meditations*, p. 9.)

The first paper of the "Rambler" was published on Tuesday the 20th of March, 1749-50; and its author was enabled to continue it, without interruption, every Tuesday and Saturday, till Saturday the 17th of March,[2] 1752, on which day it closed. This is a strong confirmation of the truth of a remark of his, which I have had occasion to quote elsewhere,[3] that "a man may write at any time, if he will set himself doggedly to it;" for, notwithstanding his constitutional indolence, his depression of spirits, and his labour in carrying on his Dictionary, he answered the stated calls of the press twice a week from the stores of his mind during all that time; having received no assistance, except four billets in No. 10, by Miss Mulso,

[1] I have heard Dr. Warton mention, that he was at Mr. Robert Dodsley's with the late Mr. Moore, and several of his friends, considering what should be the name of the periodical paper which Moore had undertaken. Garrick proposed *The Salad*, which, by a curious coincidence, was afterwards applied to himself by Goldsmith:

"Our Garrick's a salad, for in him we see
Oil, vinegar, sugar, and saltness agree!"

At last, the company having separated, without any thing of which they approved having been offered, Dodsley himself thought of *The World*. B.

[2] Malone has pointed out that this date should be the 14th of March.

[3] *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, 3rd edit. p. 28. B.

now Mrs. Chapone; No. 30, by Mrs. Catharine Talbot; No. 97, by Mr. Samuel Richardson, whom he describes in an introductory note as "An author who has enlarged the knowledge of human nature and taught the passions to move at the command of virtue;" and Nos. 44 and 100, by Mrs. Elizabeth Carter.

Posterity will be astonished when they are told, upon the authority of Johnson himself, that many of these discourses, which we should suppose had been laboured with all the slow attention of literary leisure, were written in haste as the moment pressed, without even being read over by him before they were printed. It can be accounted for only in this way; that by reading and meditation, and a very close inspection of life, he had accumulated a great fund of miscellaneous knowledge, which by a peculiar promptitude of mind, was ever ready at his call, and which he had constantly accustomed himself to clothe in the most apt and energetic expression. Sir Joshua Reynolds once asked him by what means he had attained his extraordinary accuracy and flow of language. He told him, that he had early laid it down as a fixed rule to do his best on every occasion, and in every company: to impart whatever he knew in the most forcible language he could put it in; and that by constant practice, and never suffering any careless expressions to escape him, or attempting to deliver his thoughts without arranging them in the clearest manner, it became habitual to him.

Yet he was not altogether unprepared as a periodical writer; for I have in my possession a small duodecimo volume, in which he has written, in the form of "Mr. Locke's Common-Place Book," a variety of hints for essays on different subjects. He has marked upon the first blank leaf of it, "To the 128th page, collections for 'the RAMBLER';" and in another place, "In fifty-two there were seventeen provided; in 97—21; in 190—25." At a subsequent period (probably after the work was finished) he added, "In all, taken of provided materials, 30."

Sir John Hawkins, who is unlucky upon all occasions,

tells us, that "This method of accumulating intelligence had been practised by Mr. Addison, and is humorously described in one of the 'Spectators,' wherein he feigns to have dropped his paper of *notanda*, consisting of a diverting medley of broken sentences and loose hints, which he tells us he had collected, and meant to make use of. Much of the same kind is Johnson's 'Adversaria'" (*Life of Johnson*, p. 268). But the truth is, that there is no resemblance at all between them. Addison's note was a fiction, in which unconnected fragments of his lucubrations were purposely jumbled together, in as odd a manner as he could, in order to produce a laughable effect. Whereas Johnson's abbreviations are all distinct, and applicable to each subject of which the head is mentioned.

For instance, there is the following specimen :

Youth's Entry, &c.

"Baxter's account of things in which he had changed his mind as he grew up. Voluminous.—No wonder.—If every man was to tell, or mark, on how many subjects he has changed, it would make vols. but the changes not always observed by man's self.—From pleasure to bus. [*business*] to quiet; from thoughtfulness to reflect. to piety; from dissipation to domestic. by impercept. gradat. but the change is certain. Dial *non progredi, progress. esse conspicimus.* Look back, consider what was thought at some dist. period.

"*Hope predom. in youth. Mind not willingly indulges unpleasing thoughts.* The world lies all enamelled before him, as a distant prospect sun-gilt;[1]—inequalities only found by coming to it. *Love is to be all joy—children excellent*—Fame to be constant—caresses of the great—applauses of the learned—smiles of Beauty.

"*Fear of disgrace—Bashfulness*—Finds things of less importance. Miscarriages forgot like excellences;—if remembered, of no import. Danger of sinking into negligence of reputation;—lest the fear of disgrace destroy activity.

"*Confidence in himself.* Long tract of life before him.—No thought of sickness.—Embarrassment of affairs.—Distraction of family. Public calamities.—No sense of the prevalence of bad

[1] This most beautiful image of the enchanting delusion of youthful prospect has not been used in any of Johnson's essays. B.

habits. Negligent of time—ready to undertake—careless to pursue—all changed by time.

"*Confident of others*—unsuspecting as unexperienced—imagining himself secure against neglect, never imagines they will venture to treat him ill. Ready to trust; expecting to be trusted. Convinced by time of the selfishness, the meanness, the cowardice, the treachery of men.

"Youth ambitious, as thinking honours easy to be had.

"Different kinds of praise pursued at different periods. Of the gay in youth.—dang. hurt. &c. despised.

"Of the fancy in manhood. Ambit.—stocks—bargains.—Of the wise and sober in old age—seriousness—formality—maxims, but general—only of the rich, otherwise age is happy—but at last everything referred to riches—no having fame, honour, influence, without subjection to caprice.

"Horace.

"Hard it would be if men entered life with the same views with which they leave it, or left as they enter it.—No hope—no undertaking—no regard to benevolence—no fear of disgrace, &c.

"Youth to be taught the piety of age—age to retain the honour of youth."

This, it will be observed, is the sketch of No. 196 of the "Rambler." I shall gratify my readers with another specimen:

"*Confederacies difficult; why.*

"Seldom in war a match for single persons—nor in peace; therefore kings make themselves absolute. Confederacies in learning—every great work the work of one. *Bruy.* Scholars' friendship like ladies. Scribebamus, &c. Mart. The apple of discord—the laurel of discord—the poverty of criticism. Swift's opinion of the power of six geniuses united. That union scarce possible. His remarks just;—man a social, not steady nature. Drawn to man by words, repelled by passions. Orb drawn by attraction, rep. [*repelled*] by centrifugal.

"Common danger unites by crushing other passions—but they return. Equally hinders compliance. Superiority produces insolence and envy. Too much regard in each to private interest;—too little.

"The mischiefs of private and exclusive societies.—The fitness of social attraction diffused through the whole. The mischiefs of too partial love of our country. Contraction of moral duties.—Οι φιλοι ου φιλος.

"Every man moves upon his own centre, and therefore repels

others from too near a contact, though he may comply with some general laws.

"Of confederacy with superiors every one knows the inconvenience. With equals, no authority;—every man his own opinion—his own interest.

"Man and wife hardly united;—scarce ever without children. Computation, if two to one against two, how many against five? If confederacies were easy—useless;—many oppresses many.—If possible only to some, dangerous. *Principum amicitias.*"

Here we see the embryo of No. 45 of the "Adventurer"; and it is a confirmation of what I shall presently have occasion to mention, that the papers in that collection marked T. were written by Johnson.

This scanty preparation of materials will not, however, much diminish our wonder at the extraordinary fertility of his mind; for the proportion which they bear to the number of essays which he wrote, is very small; and it is remarkable, that those for which he had made no preparation, are as rich and as highly finished, as those for which the hints were lying by him. It is also to be observed, that the papers formed from his hints are worked up with such strength and elegance, that we almost lose sight of the hints which become like "drops in the bucket." Indeed, in several instances, he has made a very slender use of them, so that many of them remain still unapplied.[1]

[1] Sir John Hawkins has selected from this little collection of materials, what he calls the "Rudiments of two of the papers of the 'Rambler.'" But he has not been able to read the manuscript distinctly. Thus he writes, p. 266, "Sailor's fate any mansion;" whereas the original is, "Sailor's life my aversion." He has also transcribed the unappropriated hints on *Writers for bread*, in which he deciphers these notable passages, one in Latin, *fatui non famæ*, instead of *fami non famæ;* Johnson having in his mind what Thuanus says of the learned German antiquary and linguist Xylander, who, he tells us, lived in such poverty, that he was supposed *fami non famæ scribere;* and another in French, *Degenté de fate et affamé d'argent*, instead of *Degouté de fame* (an old word for *renommée*), *et affamé d'argent.* The manuscript being written in an exceedingly small hand, is indeed very hard to read; but it would have been better to have left blanks than to write nonsense. B.

As the "Rambler" was entirely the work of one man, there was, of course, such a uniformity in its texture, as very much to exclude the charm of variety; and the grave and often solemn cast of thinking, which distinguished it from other periodical papers, made it, for some time, not generally liked. So slowly did this excellent work, of which twelve editions have now issued from the press, gain upon the world at large, that even in the closing number the author says, "I have never been much of a favourite of the public."

Yet, very soon after its commencement, there were who felt and acknowledged its uncommon excellence. Verses in its praise appeared in the newspapers; and the editor of the "Gentleman's Magazine" mentions, in October, his having received several letters to the same purpose from the learned. "The Student, or Oxford and Cambridge Miscellany," in which Mr. Bonnel Thornton and Mr. Colman were the principal writers, describes it as "A work that exceeds any thing of the kind ever published in this kingdom, some of the 'Spectators' excepted,—if indeed they may be excepted." And afterwards, "May the public favours crown his merits, and may not the English, under the auspicious reign of GEORGE the Second, neglect a man, who, had he lived in the first century, would have been one of the greatest favourites of Augustus." This flattery of the monarch had no effect. It is too well known, that the second George never was an Augustus to learning or genius.

Johnson told me, with an amiable fondness, a little pleasing circumstance relative to this work. Mrs. Johnson, in whose judgment and taste he had great confidence, said to him, after a few numbers of the "Rambler" had come out, "I thought very well of you before; but I did not imagine you could have written any thing equal to this." Distant praise, from whatever quarter, is not so delightful as that of a wife whom a man loves and esteems. Her approbation may be said to "come home to his *bosom*;" and being so near, its effect is most sensible and permanent.

Mr. James Elphinston, who has since published various

works, and who was ever esteemed by Johnson as a worthy man, happened to be in Scotland while the "Rambler" was coming out in single papers at London. With a laudable zeal at once for the improvement of his countrymen, and the reputation of his friend, he suggested and took the charge of an edition of those Essays at Edinburgh, which followed progressively the London publication.[1]

The following letter written at this time, though not dated, will shew how much pleased Johnson was with this publication, and what kindness and regard he had for Mr. Elphinston.

"TO MR. JAMES ELPHINSTON.

[*No date.*]

"DEAR SIR,

"I CANNOT but confess the failures of my correspondence, but hope the same regard which you express for me on every other occasion, will incline you to forgive me. I am often, very often, ill; and, when I am well, am obliged to work: and, indeed, have never much used myself to punctuality. You are, however, not to make unkind inferences, when I forbear to reply to your kindness; for be assured, I never receive a letter from you without great pleasure, and a very warm sense of your generosity and friendship, which I heartily blame myself for not cultivating with more care. In this, as in many other cases, I go wrong, in opposition to conviction; for I think scarce any temporal good equally to be desired with the regard and familiarity of worthy men. I hope we shall be some time nearer to each other, and have a more ready way of pouring out our hearts.

"I am glad that you still find encouragement to proceed in your publication, and shall beg the favour of six more volumes to add to my former six, when you can, with any convenience, send them me. Please to present a set, in my name, to Mr. Ruddi-

[1] It was executed in the printing-office of Sands, Murray, and Cochran, with uncommon elegance, upon writing paper of a duodecimo size, and with the greatest correctness: and Mr. Elphinston enriched it with translations of the mottoes. When completed, it made eight handsome volumes. It is, unquestionably, the most accurate and beautiful edition of this work; and there being but a small impression, it is now become scarce, and sells at a very high price. B.

man,[1] of whom, I hear, that his learning is not his highest excellence. I have transcribed the mottoes, and returned them, I hope not too late, of which I think many very happily performed. Mr. Cave has put the last in the magazine, in which I think he did well. I beg of you to write soon, and to write often, and to write long letters, which I hope in time to repay you; but you must be a patient creditor. I have, however, this of gratitude, that I think of you with regard when I do not, perhaps, give the proofs which I ought, of being, Sir, your most obliged and most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

This year he wrote to the same gentleman another letter upon a mournful occasion.

"TO MR. JAMES ELPHINSTON.

"September 25, 1750.

"DEAR SIR,

"YOU have, as I find by every kind of evidence, lost an excellent mother; and I hope you will not think me incapable of partaking of your grief. I have a mother, now eighty-two years of age, whom, therefore, I must soon lose, unless it please God that she should rather mourn for me. I read the letters in which you relate your mother's death to Mrs. Strahan, and think I do myself honour, when I tell you that I read them with tears; but tears are neither to *you* nor to *me* of any farther use, when once the tribute of nature has been paid. The business of life summons us away from useless grief, and calls us to the exercise of those virtues of which we are lamenting our deprivation. The greatest benefit which one friend can confer upon another, is to guard, and excite, and elevate, his virtues. This your mother will still perform, if

[1] Mr. Thomas Ruddiman, the learned Grammarian of Scotland, well known for his various excellent works, and for his accurate editions of several authors. He was also a man of a most worthy private character. His zeal for the royal House of Stuart did not render him less estimable in Dr. Johnson's eye. B. Thomas Ruddiman (1674—1757), a native of Banffshire, preceded David Hume as librarian of the Advocates' Library at Edinburgh. He was said to have been the best Latin scholar that Scotland had produced since Buchanan. James Elphinston (1721—1809) published a translation of Martial, of which Johnson is reported to have said that there was too much folly in it for madness, and too much madness for folly.

you diligently preserve the memory of her life, and of her death: a life, so far as I can learn, useful, wise, and innocent; and a death resigned, peaceful, and holy. I cannot forbear to mention, that neither reason nor revelation denies you to hope, that you may increase her happiness by obeying her precepts; and that she may, in her present state, look with pleasure upon every act of virtue to which her instructions or example have contributed. Whether this be more than a pleasing dream, or a just opinion of separate spirits, is, indeed, of no great importance to us, when we consider ourselves as acting under the eye of God: yet, surely, there is something pleasing in the belief, that our separation from those whom we love is merely corporeal; and it may be a great incitement to virtuous friendship, if it can be made probable, that that union that has received the divine approbation shall continue to eternity.

"There is one expedient by which you may, in some degree, continue her presence. If you write down minutely what you remember of her from your earliest years, you will read it with great pleasure, and receive from it many hints of soothing recollection, when time shall remove her yet farther from you, and your grief shall be matured to veneration. To this, however painful for the present, I cannot but advise you, as to a source of comfort and satisfaction in the time to come; for all comfort and all satisfaction is sincerely wished you by, Dear Sir, your most obliged, most obedient, and most humble servant,

"Sam. Johnson."

The "Rambler" has increased in fame as in age. Soon after its first folio edition was concluded, it was published in six duodecimo volumes; and its author lived to see ten numerous editions of it in London, beside those of Ireland and Scotland.

I profess myself to have ever entertained a profound veneration for the astonishing force and vivacity of mind, which the "Rambler" exhibits. That Johnson had penetration enough to see and seeing would not disguise the general misery of man in this state of being may have given rise to the superficial notion of his being too stern a philosopher. But men of reflection will be sensible that he has given a true representation of human existence, and that he has, at the same time, with a generous benevolence displayed every consolation which our state affords us; not only those arising from the hopes of futurity, but such

as may be attained in the immediate progress through life. He has not depressed the soul to despondency and indifference. He has everywhere inculcated study, labour, and exertion. Nay, he has shewn, in a very odious light, a man whose practice is to go about darkening the views of others, by perpetual complaints of evil, and awakening those considerations of danger and distress, which are, for the most part, lulled into a quiet oblivion. This he has done very strongly in his character of Suspirius (No. 59), from which Goldsmith took that of Croker, in his comedy of "The Good-natured Man," as Johnson told me he acknowledged to him, and which is, indeed, very obvious.

To point out the numerous subjects which the "Rambler" treats, with a dignity and perspicuity which are there united in a manner which we shall in vain look for any where else, would take up too large a portion of my book, and would, I trust, be superfluous, considering how universally those volumes are now disseminated. Even the most condensed and brilliant sentences which they contain, and which have very properly been selected under the name of "BEAUTIES,"[1] are of considerable bulk. But I may shortly observe, that the "Rambler" furnishes such an assemblage of discourses on practical religion and moral duty, of critical investigations, and allegorical and Oriental tales, that no mind can be thought very deficient that has, by constant study and meditation, assimilated to itself all that may be found there. No. 7, written in Passion-week on abstraction and self-examination, and No. 110, on penitence and the placability of the Divine Nature, cannot be too often read. No. 54, on the effect which the death of a friend should have upon us, though rather too dispiriting, may be occasionally very medicinal to the mind. Every one must suppose the writer to have

[1] Dr. Johnson was gratified by seeing this selection, and wrote to Mr. Kearsley, bookseller in Fleet-street, the following note: "Mr. Johnson sends compliments to Mr. Kearsley, and begs the favour of seeing him as soon as he can. Mr. Kearsley is desired to bring with him the last edition of what he has honoured with the name of 'BEAUTIES.' May 20, 1782." B.

been deeply impressed by a real scene; but he told me that was not the case; which shews how well his fancy could conduct him to the "house of mourning." Some of these more solemn papers, I doubt not, particularly attracted the notice of Dr. Young, the author of "The Night Thoughts," of whom my estimation is such, as to reckon his applause an honour even to Johnson. I have seen volumes of Dr. Young's copy of the "Rambler," in which he has marked the passages which he thought particularly excellent, by folding down a corner of the page; and such as he rated in a super-eminent degree, are marked by double folds. I am sorry that some of the volumes are lost. Johnson was pleased when told of the minute attention with which Young had signified his approbation of his Essays.

I will venture to say, that in no writings whatever can be found more *bark and steel for the mind*, if I may use the expression; more that can brace and invigorate every manly and noble sentiment. No. 32, on patience, even under extreme misery, is wonderfully lofty, and as much above the rant of stoicism, as the Sun of Revelation is brighter than the twilight of Pagan philosophy. I never read the following sentence without feeling my frame thrill: "I think there is some reason for questioning whether the body and mind are not so proportioned, that the one can bear all which can be inflicted on the other; whether virtue cannot stand its ground as long as life, and whether a soul well principled will not be separated sooner than subdued."

Though instruction be the predominant purpose of the "Rambler," yet it is enlivened with a considerable portion of amusement. Nothing can be more erroneous than the notion which some persons have entertained, that Johnson was then a retired author, ignorant of the world; and, of consequence, that he wrote only from his imagination, when he described characters and manners. He said to me, that before he wrote that work, he had been "running about the world," as he expressed it, more than almost any body; and I have heard him relate, with much

satisfaction, that several of the characters in the "Rambler" were drawn so naturally, that when it first circulated in numbers, a club, in one of the towns of Essex, imagined themselves to be severally exhibited in it, and were much incensed against a person who, they suspected, had thus made them objects of public notice; nor were they quieted till authentic assurance was given them, that the "Rambler" was written by a person who had never heard of any one of them. Some of the characters are believed to have been actually drawn from the life, particularly that of Prospero from Garrick, who never entirely forgave its pointed satire. For instances of fertility of fancy, and accurate description of real life, I appeal to No. 19, a man who wanders from one profession to another, with most plausible reasons for every change: No. 34, female fastidiousness and timorous refinement: No. 82, a Virtuoso who has collected curiosities: No. 98, petty modes of entertaining a company, and conciliating kindness: No. 182, fortune-hunting: No. 194—195, a tutor's account of the follies of his pupil: No. 197—198, legacy-hunting: He has given a specimen of his nice observation of the mere external appearances of life, in the following passage in No. 179, against affectation, that frequent and most disgusting quality:

"He that stands to contemplate the crowds that fill the streets of a populous city, will see many passengers, whose air and motions it will be difficult to behold without contempt and laughter; but if he examine what are the appearances that thus powerfully excite his risibility, he will find among them neither poverty nor disease, nor any involuntary or painful defect. The disposition to derision and insult, is awakened by the softness of foppery, the swell of insolence, the liveliness of levity, or the solemnity of grandeur; by the sprightly trip, the stately stalk, the formal strut, and the lofty mien; by gestures intended to catch the eye, and by looks elaborately formed as evidences of importance."

Every page of the "Rambler" shews a mind teeming with classical allusion and poetical imagery: illustrations from other writers are, upon all occasions, so ready, and

mingle so easily in his periods, that the whole appears of one uniform vivid texture.

The style of this work has been censured by some shallow critics as involved and turgid, and abounding with antiquated and hard words. So ill-founded is the first part of this objection, that I will challenge all who may honour this book with a perusal, to point out any English writer whose language conveys his meaning with equal force and perspicuity. It must, indeed, be allowed, that the structure of his sentences is expanded, and often has somewhat of the inversion of Latin; and that he delighted to express familiar thoughts in philosophical language; being in this the reverse of Socrates, who, it is said, reduced philosophy to the simplicity of common life. But let us attend to what he himself says in his concluding paper: "When common words were less pleasing to the ear, or less distinct in their signification, I have familiarized the terms of philosophy, by applying them to popular ideas."[1] And, as to the second part of this objection, upon a late careful revision of the work, I can with confidence say, that it is amazing how few of those words, for which it has been unjustly characterized, are actually to be found in it; I am sure, not the proportion of one to each paper. This idle charge has been echoed from one babbler to another, who have confounded Johnson's Essays with Johnson's Dictionary; and because he thought it right in a Lexicon of our language to collect many words which had fallen into disuse but were supported by great authorities, it has been imagined that all of these have been interwoven into his own compositions. That some of them have been adopted by him unnecessarily, may, perhaps, be allowed; but, in general they are evidently an advantage, for without them his stately ideas would be confined and cramped. "He that thinks with more extent than another, will want words of larger meaning" (*Idler*, No. 70). He once told me, that he

[1] Yet his style did not escape the harmless shafts of pleasant humour; for the ingenious Bonnell Thornton published a mock *Rambler* in the *Drury-lane Journal*. B.

had formed his style upon that of Sir William Temple, and upon Chambers's "Proposal" for his Dictionary.[1] He certainly was mistaken; or if he imagined at first that he was imitating Temple, he was very unsuccessful; for nothing can be more unlike than the simplicity of Temple, and the richness of Johnson. Their styles differ as plain cloth and brocade. Temple, indeed, seems equally erroneous in supposing that he himself had formed his style upon Sandys's "View of the State of Religion in the Western Parts of the World."

The style of Johnson was, undoubtedly, much formed upon that of the great writers in the last century, Hooker, Bacon, Sanderson, Hakewell, and others; those "GIANTS," as they were well characterised by A GREAT PERSONAGE [George the Third], whose authority, were I to name him, would stamp a reverence on the opinion.

We may, with the utmost propriety, apply to his learned style that passage of Horace, a part of which he has taken as the motto to his Dictionary:

> "Cum tabulis animum censoris sumet honesti;
> Audebit quæcumque parum splendoris habebunt
> Et sine pondere erunt et hono reindigna ferentur
> Verba movere loco, quamvis invita recedant
> Et versentur adhuc intra penetralia Vestæ.
> Obscurata diu populo bonus eruet atque
> Proferet in lucem speciosa vocabula rerum,
> Quæ priscis memorata Catonibus atque Cethegis
> Nunc situs informis premit et deserta vetustas;
> Adsciscet nova quæ genitor produxerit usus.
> Vehemens et liquidus puroque simillimus amni
> Fundet opes Latiumque beabit divite lingua."[2]

To so great a master of thinking, to one of such vast and various knowledge as Johnson, might have been

[1] Probably Chambers's *Proposal* for a second and improved edition of his *Cyclopædia*, which was published in 1738. Dean Stanley calls Ephraim Chambers the "father of Cyclopædias." *Memorials of Westminster Abbey*, 299, *note*.

[2] Horat. Epist. ii. 2, 110. B. See Pope, *Imitations of Horace*, ii. 2, 157.

allowed a liberal indulgence of that licence which Horace claims in another place:

"————————Si forte necesse est
Indiciis monstrare recentibus abdita rerum,
Fingere cinctutis non exaudita Cethegis
Continget, dabiturque licentia sumpta pudenter;
Et nova fictaque nuper habebunt verba fidem si
Græco fonte cadent, parce detorta. Quid autem
Cæcilio Plautoque dabit Romanus ademptum
Virgilio Varioque? Ego cur acquirere pauca
Si possum invideor cum lingua Catonis et Enni
Sermonem patrium ditaverit, et nova rerum
Nomina protulerit? Licuit semperque licebit
Signatum præsente nota producere nomen" (*Ars Poet.* 48).

Yet Johnson assured me, that he had not taken upon him to add more than four or five words to the English language, of his own information; and he was very much offended at the general licence by no means "modestly taken" in his time, not only to coin new words, but to use many words in senses quite different from their established meaning, and those frequently very fantastical.

Sir Thomas Browne, whose Life Johnson wrote, was remarkably fond of Anglo-Latin diction; and to his example we are to ascribe Johnson's sometimes indulging himself in this kind of phraseology.[1] Johnson's comprehension of mind was the mould for his language. Had his conceptions been narrower, his expression would have been easier. His sentences have a dignified march; and, it is certain, that his example has given a general elevation to the language of his country, for many of our best writers have approached very near to him; and, from the influence which he has had upon our composition, scarcely

[1] The observation of his having imitated Sir Thomas Browne has been made by many people; and lately it has been insisted on, and illustrated by a variety of quotations from Browne, in one of the popular Essays written by the Reverend Mr. Knox, master of Tunbridge school, whom I have set down in my list of those who have sometimes not unsuccessfully imitated Dr. Johnson's style. B.

any thing is written now that is not better expressed than was usual before he appeared to lead the national taste.

This circumstance, the truth of which must strike every critical reader, has been so happily enforced by Mr. Courtenay, in his "Moral and Literary Character of Dr. Johnson," that I cannot prevail on myself to withhold it, notwithstanding his, perhaps, too great partiality for one of his friends :

> "By nature's gifts ordain'd mankind to rule,
> He, like a Titian, form'd his brilliant school ;
> And taught congenial spirits to excel,
> While from his lips impressive wisdom fell.
> Our boasted GOLDSMITH felt the sovereign sway ;
> From him deriv'd the sweet, yet nervous lay.
> To Fame's proud cliff he bade our Raffaelle rise :
> Hence REYNOLDS' pen with REYNOLDS' pencil vies.
> With Johnson's flame melodious BURNEY glows,
> While the grand strain in smoother cadence flows.
> And you, MALONE, to critic learning dear,
> Correct and elegant, refin'd though clear,
> By studying him, acquir'd that classic taste,
> Which high in Shakespeare's fane thy statue plac'd.
> Near Johnson STEEVENS stands, on scenic ground,
> Acute, laborious, fertile, and profound.
> Ingenious HAWKESWORTH to this school we owe,
> And scarce the pupil from the tutor know.
> Here early parts accomplish'd JONES sublimes,
> And science blends with Asia's lofty rhymes :
> Harmonious JONES ! who in his splendid strains
> Sings Camdeo's sports, on Agra's flowery plains,
> In Hindu fictions while we fondly trace
> Love and the Muses, deck'd with Attic grace.
> Amid these names can BOSWELL be forgot,
> Scarce by North Britons now esteem'd a Scot ?[1]

[1] The following observation in Mr. Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* may sufficiently account for that gentleman's being "now scarcely esteemed a Scot" by many of his countrymen : "If he (Dr. Johnson) was particularly prejudiced against the Scots, it was because they were more in his way ; because he thought their success in England rather exceeded the due proportion of their real merit ; and because he could not but see in them that nationality which, I believe, no liberal-

Who to the sage devoted from his youth,
Imbib'd from him the sacred love of truth;
The keen research, the exercise of mind,
And that best art, the art to know mankind.—
Nor was his energy confin'd alone
To friends around his philosophic throne:
Its influence wide improv'd our letter'd isle,
And lucid vigour mark'd the general style:
As Nile's proud waves, swoln from their oozy bed,
First o'er the neighbouring meads majestic spread;
Till gathering force, they more and more expand,
And with new virtue fertilize the land."

Johnson's language, however, must be allowed to be too masculine for the delicate gentleness of female writing. His ladies, therefore, seem strangely formal, even to ridicule; and are well denominated by the names which he has given them, as Misella, Zozima, Properantia, Rhodoclia.

It has of late been the fashion to compare the style of Addison and Johnson, and to depreciate, I think, very unjustly, the style of Addison as nerveless and feeble, because it has not the strength and energy of that of Johnson. Their prose may be balanced like the poetry of Dryden and Pope. Both are excellent, though in different ways. Addison writes with the ease of a gentleman. His readers fancy that a wise and accomplished companion is talking to them; so that he insinuates his sentiments and taste into their minds by an imperceptible influence. Johnson writes like a teacher. He dictates to his readers as if from an academical chair. They attend with awe and admiration; and his precepts are impressed upon them by his commanding eloquence. Addison's style, like a light wine, pleases everybody from the first. Johnson's, like a liquor of more body, seems too strong at first, but, by degrees, is highly relished; and such is the

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minded Scotchman will deny." Mr. Boswell, indeed, is so free from national prejudices, that he might with equal propriety have been described as "Scarce by *South* Britons now esteem'd a Scot." COURTENAY. B.

melody of his periods, so much do they captivate the ear, and seize upon the attention, that there is scarcely any writer, however inconsiderable, who does not aim, in some degree, at the same species of excellence. But let us not ungratefully undervalue that beautiful style, which has pleasingly conveyed to us much instruction and entertainment. Though comparatively weak, opposed to Johnson's Herculean vigour, let us not call it positively feeble. Let us remember the character of his style, as given by Johnson himself: "What he attempted, he performed; he is *never feeble*, and he did not wish to be energetic; he is never rapid, and he never stagnates. His sentences have neither studied amplitude, nor affected brevity: his periods, though not diligently rounded, are voluble and easy. Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison."[1]

Though the "Rambler" was not concluded till the year 1752, I shall, under this year, say all that I have to observe upon it. Some of the translations of the mottoes by himself, are admirably done. He acknowledges to have received "elegant translations" of many of them from Mr. James Elphinston; and some are very happily translated by a Mr. F. Lewis, of whom I never heard more, except that Johnson thus described him to Mr. Malone: "Sir, he lived in London, and hung loose upon society." The concluding paper of his "Rambler" is at once dignified and pathetic. I cannot, however, but wish, that he had not ended it with an unnecessary Greek verse, translated * also into an English couplet. It is too much like the conceit of those dramatic poets, who used to conclude each act with a rhyme; and the expression in the first line of his couplet, "*Celestial powers*," though proper in Pagan poetry, is ill suited to Christianity, with a "conformity" to which he consoles himself. How

[1] I shall probably, in another work, maintain the merit of Addison's poetry, which has been very unjustly depreciated. B. This work shared the fate of most of Boswell's literary projects, and was never executed.

much better would it have been, to have ended with the prose sentence: "I shall never envy the honours which wit and learning obtain in any other cause, if I can be numbered among the writers who have given ardour to virtue, and confidence to truth."

His friend, Dr. Birch, being now engaged in preparing an edition of Ralegh's smaller pieces, Dr. Johnson wrote the following letter to that gentleman:

"TO DR. BIRCH.

"Gough-square, May 12, 1750.

"SIR,

"KNOWING that you are now preparing to favour the public with a new edition of Ralegh's miscellaneous pieces, I have taken the liberty to send you a Manuscript, which fell by chance within my notice. I perceive no proofs of forgery in my examination of it; and the owner tells me that, as he has heard, the handwriting is Sir Walter's. If you should find reason to conclude it genuine, it will be a kindness to the owner, a blind person,[1] to recommend it to the booksellers.

"I am, Sir, your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

His just abhorrence of Milton's political notions was ever strong. But this did not prevent his warm admiration of Milton's great poetical merit, to which he has done illustrious justice, beyond all who have written upon the subject. And this year he not only wrote a Prologue, which was spoken by Mr. Garrick before the acting of "Comus" at Drury-lane theatre, for the benefit of Milton's grand-daughter, but took a very zealous interest in the success of the charity. On the day preceding the performance he published the following letter in the "General Advertiser," addressed to the printer of that paper:

"SIR,

"THAT a certain degree of reputation is acquired merely by approving the works of genius, and testifying a regard to the memory of authors, is a truth too evident to be denied; and therefore to ensure a participation of fame with a celebrated poet,

[1] Mrs. Williams is probably the person meant. B.

many, who would, perhaps, have contributed to starve him when alive, have heaped expensive pageants on his grave.

"It must, indeed, be confessed, that this method of becoming known to posterity with honour, is peculiar to the great, or at least to the wealthy; but an opportunity now offers for almost every individual to secure the praise of paying a just regard to the illustrious dead, united with the pleasure of doing good to the living. To assist industrious indigence, struggling with distress and debilitated by age, is a display of virtue, and an acquisition of happiness and honour.

"Whoever, then, would be thought capable of pleasure in reading the works of our incomparable Milton, and not so destitute of gratitude as to refuse to lay out a trifle in rational and elegant entertainment, for the benefit of his living remains, for the exercise of their own virtue, the increase of their reputation, and the pleasing consciousness of doing good, should appear at Drury-lane theatre to-morrow, April 5, when 'Comus' will be performed for the benefit of Mrs. Elizabeth Foster, grand-daughter to the author, and the only surviving branch of his family.[1]

"N.B. There will be a new prologue on the occasion, written by the author of 'Irene,' and spoken by Mr. Garrick; and, by particular desire, there will be added to the Masque a dramatic satire, called 'Lethe,' in which Mr. Garrick will perform."

In 1751 we are to consider him as carrying on both his Dictionary and "Rambler." But he also wrote "The Life of Cheynel,"* in the miscellany called "The Student"; and the Reverend Dr. Douglas having with uncommon acuteness clearly detected a gross forgery and imposition upon the public by William Lauder, a Scotch schoolmaster, who had, with equal impudence and ingenuity, represented Milton as a plagiary from certain modern Latin poets, Johnson, who had been so far imposed upon as to furnish a Preface and Postscript to his work, now dictated a letter for Lauder, addressed to Dr. Douglas, acknowledging his fraud in terms of suitable contrition.[2]

[1] She died May 9, 1754. The performance only brought her £130.

[2] Lest there should be any person, at any future period, absurd enough to suspect that Johnson was a partaker in Lauder's fraud, or had any knowledge of it, when he assisted him with his masterly pen, it is proper here to quote the words of Dr. Douglas,

This extraordinary attempt of Lauder was no sudden effort. He had brooded over it for many years: and to this hour it is uncertain what his principal motive was, unless it were a vain notion of his superiority, in being able, by whatever means, to deceive mankind. To effect this, he produced certain passages from Grotius, Masenius, and others, which had a faint resemblance to some parts of the "Paradise Lost." In these he interpolated some fragments of Hog's Latin translation of that poem, alleging that the mass thus fabricated was the archetype from which Milton copied. These fabrications he published from time to time in the "Gentleman's Magazine"; and, exulting in his fancied success, he in 1750 ventured to collect them into a pamphlet, entitled "An Essay on Milton's Use and Imitation of the Moderns in his 'Paradise Lost.'" To this pamphlet Johnson wrote a Preface, in full persuasion of Lauder's honesty, and a Postscript recommending, in the most persuasive terms, a subscription for the relief of a grand-daughter of Milton, of whom he thus speaks:

"It is yet in the power of a great people to reward the poet whose name they boast, and from their alliance to whose genius they claim some kind of superiority to every other nation of the

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now Bishop of Salisbury, at the time when he detected the imposition. "It is to be hoped, nay, it is *expected*, that the elegant and nervous writer, whose judicious sentiments and inimitable style point out the author of Lauder's Preface and Postscript, will no longer allow one to *plume himself with his feathers*, who appeareth so little to deserve assistance; an assistance which I am persuaded would never have been communicated, had there been the least suspicion of those facts which I have been the instrument of conveying to the world in these sheets." *Milton no Plagiary*, 2nd edit. p. 78. And his Lordship has been pleased now to authorize me to say, in the strongest manner, that there is no ground whatever for any unfavourable reflection against Dr. Johnson, who expressed the strongest indignation against Lauder. B. Lauder afterwards went to Barbadoes, where he tried to keep a school, but fell into general contempt, and died very miserably about the year 1771. See Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, iii. 294, for an attempt to play a similar trick on Scott.

earth; that poet, whose works may possibly be read when every other monument of British greatness shall be obliterated; to reward him, not with pictures or with medals, which, if he sees, he sees with contempt, but with tokens of gratitude, which he, perhaps, may even now consider as not unworthy the regard of an immortal spirit."

Surely this is inconsistent with "enmity towards Milton," which Sir John Hawkins imputes to Johnson upon this occasion, adding,

"I could all along observe that Johnson seemed to approve not only of the design, but of the argument; and seemed to exult in a persuasion, that the reputation of Milton was likely to suffer by this discovery. That he was not privy to the imposture, I am well persuaded; that he wished well to the argument, may be inferred from the Preface, which indubitably was written by Johnson."

Is it possible for any man of clear judgment to suppose that Johnson, who so nobly praised the poetical excellence of Milton in a Postscript to this very "discovery," as he then supposed it, could, at the same time, exult in a persuasion that the great poet's reputation was likely to suffer by it? This is an inconsistency of which Johnson was incapable; nor can any thing more be fairly inferred from the Preface, than that Johnson, who was alike distinguished for ardent curiosity and love of truth, was pleased with an investigation by which both were gratified. That he was actuated by these motives, and certainly by no unworthy desire to depreciate our great epic poet, is evident from his own words; for, after mentioning the general zeal of men of genius and literature, "to advance the honour, and distinguish the beauties of 'Paradise Lost,'" he says,

"Among the inquiries to which this ardour of criticism has naturally given occasion, none is more obscure in itself, or more worthy of rational curiosity, than a retrospection of the progress of this mighty genius in the construction of his work; a view of the fabric gradually rising, perhaps, from small beginnings, till its foundation rests in the centre, and its turrets sparkle in the skies; to trace back the structure through all its varieties, to the simplicity of its first plan; to find what was first projected, whence the

scheme was taken, how it was improved, by what assistance it was executed, and from what stores the materials were collected; whether its founder dug them from the quarries of Nature, or demolished other buildings to embellish his own."[1]

—Is this the language of one who wished to blast the laurels of Milton?

Though Johnson's circumstances were at this time far from being easy, his humane and charitable disposition was constantly exerting itself. Mrs. Anna Williams, daughter of a very ingenious Welsh physician, and a woman of more than ordinary talents and literature, having come to London in hopes of being cured of a cataract in both her eyes, which afterwards ended in total blindness, was kindly received as a constant visitor at his house while Mrs. Johnson lived; and, after her death, having come under his roof in order to have an operation upon her eyes performed with more comfort to her than in lodgings, she had an apartment from him during the rest of her life, at all times when he had a house.

In 1752 he was almost entirely occupied with his Dictionary. The last paper of his "Rambler" was published March 14 this year; after which, there was a cessation for some time of any exertion of his talents as an essayist. But in the same year, Dr. Hawkesworth, who was his warm admirer, and a studious imitator of his style, and then lived in great intimacy with him, began a periodical paper, entitled, "THE ADVENTURER," in connexion with other gentlemen, one of whom was Johnson's much-loved friend, Dr. Bathurst; and, without doubt, they received many valuable hints from his conversation, most of his friends having been so assisted in the course of their works.

[1] Proposals (written evidently by Johnson) for printing the *Adamus Exul* of Grotius, with a Translation and Notes by Wm. Lauder, A.M. *Gent. Mag.* 1747, vol. 17, p. 404. But Croker is right in maintaining that it was Johnson's duty to have taken some trouble to verify Lauder's charges before writing a preface to them. Had he done so in a single instance the imposture could not have stood for a moment.

That there should be a suspension of his literary labours during a part of the year 1752, will not seem strange, when it is considered that soon after closing his "Rambler," he suffered a loss which, there can be no doubt, affected him with the deepest distress. For on the 17th of March, O. S. his wife died. Why Sir John Hawkins should unwarrantably take upon him even to *suppose* that Johnson's fondness for her was *dissembled* (meaning simulated or assumed), and to assert, that if it was not the case, "it was a lesson he had learned by rote," I cannot conceive; unless it proceeded from a want of similar feelings in his own breast. To argue from her being much older than Johnson, or any other circumstances, that he could not really love her, is absurd; for love is not a subject of reasoning, but of feeling, and therefore there are no common principles upon which one can persuade another concerning it. Every man feels for himself, and knows how he is affected by particular qualities in the person he admires, the impressions of which are too minute and delicate to be substantiated in language.

The following very solemn and affecting prayer was found after Dr. Johnson's decease, by his servant, Mr. Francis Barber, who delivered it to my worthy friend the Reverend Mr. Strahan, Vicar of Islington, who at my earnest request has obligingly favoured me with a copy of it, which he and I compared with the original. I present it to the world as an undoubted proof of a circumstance in the character of my illustrious friend, which, though some whose hard minds I never shall envy, may attack as superstitious, will I am sure endear him more to numbers of good men. I have an additional, and that a personal motive for presenting it, because it sanctions what I myself have always maintained and am fond to indulge:

"April 26, 1752, being after 12 at night of the 25th.

"O Lord! Governor of heaven and earth, in whose hands are embodied and departed Spirits, if thou hast ordained the Souls of the Dead to minister to the Living, and appointed my departed

Wife to have care of me, grant that I may enjoy the good effects of her attention and ministration, whether exercised by appearance, impulses, dreams, or in any other manner agreeable to thy Government. Forgive my presumption, enlighten my ignorance, and however meaner agents are employed, grant me the blessed influences of thy holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

What actually followed upon this most interesting piece of devotion by Johnson, we are not informed; but I, whom it has pleased God to afflict in a similar manner to that which occasioned it, have certain experience of benignant communication by dreams.

That his love for his wife was of the most ardent kind, and, during the long period of fifty years, was unimpaired by the lapse of time, is evident from various passages in the series of his "Prayers and Meditations," published by the Reverend Mr. Strahan, as well as from other memorials, two of which I select, as strongly marking the tenderness and sensibility of his mind.

"March 28, 1753. I kept this day as the anniversary of my Tetty's death, with prayer and tears in the morning. In the evening I prayed for her conditionally, if it were lawful."

"April 23, 1753. I know not whether I do not too much indulge the vain longings of affection; but I hope they intenerate my heart, and that when I die like my Tetty, this affection will be acknowledged in a happy interview, and that in the mean time I am incited by it to piety. I will, however, not deviate too much from common and received methods of devotion."

Her wedding-ring, when she became his wife, was, after her death, preserved by him, as long as he lived, with an affectionate care, in a little round wooden box, in the inside of which he pasted a slip of paper, thus inscribed by him in fair characters, as follows:

"Eheu!
Eliz. Johnson,
Nupta Jul. 9° 1736
Mortua, eheu!
Mart. 17° 1752."

After his death, Mr. Francis Barber, his faithful servant,

and residuary legatee, offered this memorial of tenderness to Mrs. Lucy Porter, Mrs. Johnson's daughter ; but she having declined to accept of it, he had it enamelled as a mourning-ring for his old master, and presented it to his wife, Mrs. Barber, who now has it.

The state of mind in which a man must be upon the death of a woman whom he sincerely loves, had been in his contemplation many years before. In his "IRENE" we find the following fervent and tender speech of Demetrius, addressed to his Aspasia :

> "From those bright regions of eternal day,
> Where now thou shin'st amongst thy fellow saints,
> Array'd in purer light, look down on me !
> In pleasing visions and assuasive dreams,
> O ! soothe my soul, and teach me how to lose thee."

I have, indeed, been told by Mrs. Desmoulins, who before her marriage, lived for some time with Mrs. Johnson at Hampstead, that she indulged herself in country air and nice living at an unsuitable expense, while her husband was drudging in the smoke of London, and that she by no means treated him with that complacency which is the most engaging quality in a wife. But all this is perfectly compatible with his fondness for her, especially when it is remembered that he had a high opinion of her understanding, and that the impressions which her beauty, real or imaginary, had originally made upon his fancy, being continued by habit, had not been effaced, though she herself was doubtless much altered for the worse. The dreadful shock of separation took place in the night ; and he immediately dispatched a letter to his friend, the Reverend Dr. Taylor, which, as Taylor told me, expressed grief in the strongest manner he had ever read ; so that it is much to be regretted it has not been preserved. The letter was brought to Dr. Taylor, at his house in the Cloisters, Westminster, about three in the morning ; and as it signified an earnest desire to see him, he got up, and went to Johnson as soon as he was dressed, and found him in tears and in extreme agitation.

After being a little while together, Johnson requested him to join with him in prayer. He then prayed extempore, as did Dr. Taylor; and thus by means of that piety which was ever his primary object, his troubled mind was, in some degree, soothed and composed.

The next day he wrote as follows:

"TO THE REVEREND DR. TAYLOR.

"DEAR SIR,

"LET me have your company and instruction. Do not live away from me. My distress is great.

"Pray desire Mrs. Taylor to inform me what mourning I should buy for my mother and Miss Porter, and bring a note in writing with you.

"Remember me in your prayers, for vain is the help of man.

"I am, dear Sir, &c.

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"March 18, 1752."

That his sufferings upon the death of his wife were severe, beyond what are commonly endured, I have no doubt, from the information of many who were then about him, to none of whom I give more credit than to Mr. Francis Barber, his faithful negro servant,[1] who came into his family about a fortnight after the dismal event. These sufferings were aggravated by the melancholy inherent in his constitution; and although he probably was

[1] Francis Barber was born in Jamaica, and was brought to England in 1750 by Colonel Bathurst, father of Johnson's very intimate friend, Dr. Bathurst. He was sent, for some time, to the Reverend Mr. Jackson's school, at Barton, in Yorkshire. The Colonel by his will left him his freedom, and Dr. Bathurst was willing that he should enter into Johnson's service, in which he continued from 1752 till Johnson's death, with the exception of two intervals; in one of which, upon some difference with his master, he went and served an apothecary in Cheapside, but still visited Dr. Johnson occasionally; in another, he took a fancy to go to sea. Part of the time, indeed, he was, by the kindness of his master, at a school in Northamptonshire, that he might have the advantage of some learning. So early, and so lasting a connexion was there between Dr. Johnson and this humble friend. B.

not oftener in the wrong than she was, in the little disagreements which sometimes troubled his married state, during which, he owned to me, that the gloomy irritability of his existence was more painful to him than ever, he might very naturally, after her death, be tenderly disposed to charge himself with slight omissions and offences, the sense of which would give him much uneasiness.[1] Accordingly we find, about a year after her decease, that he thus addressed the Supreme Being: "O LORD, who givest the grace of repentance, and hearest the prayers of the penitent, grant that by true contrition I may obtain forgiveness of all the sins committed, and of all duties neglected, in my union with the wife whom thou hast taken from me; for the neglect of joint devotion, patient exhortation, and mild instruction" (*Prayers and Meditations*, p. 19). The kindness of his heart, notwithstanding the impetuosity of his temper, is well known to his friends; and I cannot trace the smallest foundation for the following dark and uncharitable assertion by Sir John Hawkins: "The apparition of his departed wife was altogether of the terrific kind, and hardly afforded him a hope that she was in a state of happiness" (*Life of Johnson*, p. 216). That he, in conformity with the opinion of many of the most able, learned, and pious Christians in all ages, supposed that there was a middle state after

[1] See *Rambler* (54):—"I asked him," writes Mrs. Piozzi in her *Anecdotes*, "if he ever disputed with his wife. 'Perpetually,' said he. 'My wife had a particular reverence for cleanliness, and desired the praise of neatness in her dress and furniture as many ladies do, till they become troublesome to their best friends, slaves to their own besoms, and only sigh for the hour of sweeping their husbands out of the house as dirt and useless lumber. "A clean floor is so comfortable," she would say sometimes by way of twitting; till at last I told her that I thought we had had talk enough about the floor, we would now have a touch at the ceiling!' I asked him if he ever huffed his wife about his dinner. 'So often,' replied he, 'that at last she called to me and said, "Nay, hold, Mr. Johnson, and do not make a farce of thanking God for a dinner which in a few minutes you will protest not eatable."'"

death, previous to the time at which departed souls are finally received to eternal felicity, appears, I think, unquestionably from his devotions: "And, O LORD, so far as it may be lawful in me, I commend to thy fatherly goodness *the soul of my departed wife;* beseeching thee to *grant* her whatever is best in her *present state*, and *finally to receive her to eternal happiness*" (*Prayers and Meditations*, p. 20). But this state has not been looked upon with horror, but only as less gracious.

He deposited the remains of Mrs. Johnson in the church of Bromley in Kent,[1] to which he was probably led by the residence of his friend Hawkesworth at that place. The funeral sermon which he composed for her, which was never preached, but having been given to Dr. Taylor, has been published since his death, is a performance of uncommon excellence, and full of rational and pious comfort to such as are depressed by that severe affliction which Johnson felt when he wrote it. When it is considered that it was written in such an agitation of mind, and in the short interval between her death and burial, it cannot be read without wonder.

From Mr. Francis Barber I have had the following authentic and artless account of the situation in which he found him recently after his wife's death:

"He was in great affliction. Mrs. Williams was then living in his house, which was in Gough-square. He was busy with the Dictionary. Mr. Shiels, and some others of the gentlemen who had formerly written for him, used to come about him. He had then little for himself, but frequently sent money to Mr. Shiels when in distress. The friends who visited him at that time, were chiefly Dr. Bathurst,[2] and Mr. Diamond, an apothecary in Cork-

[1] A few months before his death, Johnson placed the following epitaph on her tomb-stone, in the church of Bromley: Hic conduntur reliquiæ ELIZABETHÆ antiqua Jarvisiorum gente, Peatlingæ, apud Leicestrienses, ortæ; formosæ, cultæ, ingeniosæ, piæ; uxoris, primis nuptiis, HENRICI PORTER, secundis, SAMUELIS JOHNSON: qui multum amatam, diuque defletam hoc lapide contexit. Obiit Londini, Mense Mart. A.D. MDCCLII.

[2] Dr. Bathurst, though a physician of no inconsiderable merit, had not the good fortune to get much practice in London. He

street, Burlington-gardens, with whom he and Mrs. Williams generally dined every Sunday. There was a talk of his going to Iceland with him, which would probably have happened, had he lived. There were also Mr. Cave, Dr. Hawkesworth, Mr. Ryland, merchant on Tower-hill, Mrs. Masters, the poetess, who lived with Mr. Cave, Mrs. Carter, and sometimes Mrs. Macaulay;[1] also, Mrs. Gardiner, wife of a tallow-chandler on Snow-hill, not in the learned way, but a worthy good woman; Mr. (now Sir Joshua) Reynolds; Mr. Miller, Mr. Dodsley, Mr. Bouquet, Mr. Payne, of Paternoster-row, booksellers; Mr. Strahan, the printer; the Earl of Orrery, Lord Southwell, Mr. Garrick."

Many are, no doubt, omitted in this catalogue of his friends, and, in particular, his humble friend Mr. Robert Levet, an obscure practiser in physic amongst the lower people, his fees being sometimes very small sums, sometimes whatever provisions his patients could afford him; but of such extensive practice in that way, that Mrs. Williams has told me, his walk was from Houndsditch to Marylebone. It appears from Johnson's diary, that their acquaintance commenced about the year 1746; and such was Johnson's predilection for him, and fanciful estimation of his moderate abilities, that I have heard him say he should not be satisfied, though attended by all the College of Physicians, unless he had Mr. Levet with him. Ever since I was acquainted with Dr. Johnson, and many years before, as I have been assured by those who knew him

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was, therefore, willing to accept of employment abroad, and, to the regret of all who knew him, fell a sacrifice to the destructive climate, in the expedition against the Havannah. Mr. Langton recollects the following passage in a letter from Dr. Johnson to Mr. Beauclerk: "The Havannah is taken;—a conquest too dearly obtained; for, Bathurst died before it. '*Vix Priamus tanti totaque Troja fuit.*'" B. It was Bathurst whom Johnson praised for being a good hater: "Dear Bathurst was a man to my very heart's content; he hated a fool, and he hated a rogue, and he hated a Whig; he was a very good hater." He told Mrs. Piozzi that he loved "Dear, dear Bathurst better than he ever loved any human creature."

[1] Catherine Sawbridge (1733—1791) married Dr. George Macaulay, a physician in London, in 1760. She wrote a History of England, from James I. to the Revolution, in eight vols.

earlier, Mr. Levet had an apartment in his house, or his chambers, and waited upon him every morning, through the whole course of his late and tedious breakfast. He was of a strange grotesque appearance, stiff and formal in his manner, and seldom said a word while any company was present.[1]

The circle of his friends, indeed, at this time, was extensive and various, far beyond what has been generally imagined. To trace his acquaintance with each particular person, if it could be done, would be a task, of which the labour would not be repaid by the advantage. But exceptions are to be made ; one of which must be a friend so eminent as Sir Joshua Reynolds, who was truly his *dulce decus*, and with whom he maintained an uninterrupted intimacy to the last hour of his life. When Johnson lived in Castle-street, Cavendish-square, he used frequently to visit two ladies who lived opposite to him, Miss Cotterells, daughters of Admiral Cotterell. Reynolds used also to visit there, and thus they met. Mr. Reynolds, as I have observed above, had, from the first reading of his "Life of Savage," conceived a very high admiration of Johnson's powers of writing. His conversation no less delighted him ; and he cultivated his acquaintance with the laudable zeal of one who was ambitious of general improvement. Sir Joshua, indeed, was lucky enough at their very first meeting to make a remark, which was so much above the commonplace style of conversation, that Johnson at once perceived that Reynolds had the habit of thinking for himself. The ladies were regretting the death of a friend, to whom they owed great obligations ; upon which Reynolds observed "You have, however, the comfort of being relieved from a burden of gratitude." They were shocked a little at this alleviating suggestion, as too selfish ; but Johnson defended it in his

[1] Robert Levet, according to Malone, had at one time been waiter in a coffee-house in Paris much frequented by surgeons. They took notice of him, made up a purse for him, and procured him admission to the best medical lectures of the time. Johnson's verses on his death are among the best he wrote.

clear and forcible manner, and was much pleased with the *mind*, the fair view of human nature, which it exhibited, like some of the reflections of Rochefoucault. The consequence was, that he went home with Reynolds, and supped with him.[1]

Sir Joshua told me a pleasant characteristical anecdote of Johnson about the time of their first acquaintance. When they were one evening together at the Miss Cotterells', the then Duchess of Argyle and another lady of high rank came in. Johnson thinking that the Miss Cotterells were too much engrossed by them, and that he and his friend were neglected, as low company of whom they were somewhat ashamed, grew angry ; and resolving to shock their supposed pride, by making their great visitors imagine that his friend and he were low indeed, he addressed himself in a loud tone to Mr. Reynolds, saying, " How much do you think you and I could get in a week, if we were to *work as hard* as we could ? "— as if they had been common mechanics.

His acquaintance with Bennet Langton, Esq. of Langton, in Lincolnshire, another much valued friend, commenced soon after the conclusion of his " Rambler "; which that gentleman, then a youth, had read with so much admiration, that he came to London chiefly with a view of endeavouring to be introduced to its author. By a fortunate chance he happened to take lodgings in a house where Mr. Levet frequently visited ; and having mentioned his wish to his landlady, she introduced him to Mr. Levet, who readily obtained Johnson's permission to bring Mr. Langton to him ; as, indeed, Johnson, during the whole course of his life, had no shyness, real or affected, but was easy of access to all who were properly recommended, and even wished to see numbers at his

[1] Reynolds's acquaintance with Johnson could not have begun so early as Boswell says. He did not return from Italy till the end of 1752, and Boswell has assigned 1738 as the year of Johnson's residence in Castle-street, when Reynolds was only fifteen years old. In 1753 he took a house in Great Newport-street, where the Cotterells then lived.

levée, as his morning circle of company might, with strict propriety, be called. Mr. Langton was exceedingly surprised when the sage first appeared. He had not received the smallest intimation of his figure, dress, or manner. From perusing his writings, he fancied he should see a decent, well-drest, in short, a remarkably decorous philosopher. Instead of which, down from his bed-chamber, about noon, came, as newly risen, a huge uncouth figure, with a little dark wig which scarcely covered his head, and his clothes hanging loose about him. But his conversation was so rich, so animated, and so forcible, and his religious and political notions so congenial with those in which Langton had been educated, that he conceived for him that veneration and attachment which he ever preserved. Johnson was not the less ready to love Mr. Langton, for his being of a very ancient family; for I have heard him say, with pleasure, "Langton, Sir, has a grant of free warren from Henry the Second; and Cardinal Stephen Langton, in King John's reign, was of this family."[1]

Mr. Langton afterwards went to pursue his studies at Trinity College, Oxford, where he formed an acquaintance with his fellow-student, Mr. Topham Beauclerk; who, though their opinions and modes of life were so different, that it seemed utterly improbable that they should at all agree, had so ardent a love of literature, so acute an understanding, such elegance of manners, and so well discerned the excellent qualities of Mr. Langton, a gentleman eminent not only for worth and learning, but for an inexhaustible fund of entertaining conversation, that they became intimate friends.[2]

Johnson, soon after this acquaintance began, passed a considerable time at Oxford. He at first thought it strange that Langton should associate so much with one who had the character of being loose, both in his principles

[1] Langton was a good Greek scholar, and succeeded Johnson as Professor of Ancient Literature to the Royal Academy.

[2] Topham Beauclerk was the only son of Lord Sidney Beauclerk, third son of the first Duke of St. Alban's, and was therefore great-grandson of Charles the Second, and Nell Gwynne.

and practice : but, by degrees, he himself was fascinated. Mr. Beauclerk's being of the St. Alban's family, and having, in some particulars, a resemblance to Charles the Second, contributed, in Johnson's imagination, to throw a lustre upon his other qualities ; and in a short time, the moral, pious Johnson, and the gay, dissipated Beauclerk, were companions. "What a coalition!" said Garrick, when he heard of this : "I shall have my old friend to bail out of the Round-house." But I can bear testimony that it was a very agreeable association. Beauclerk was too polite, and valued learning and wit too much, to offend Johnson by sallies of infidelity or licentiousness ; and Johnson delighted in the good qualities of Beauclerk, and hoped to correct the evil. Innumerable were the scenes in which Johnson was amused by these young men. Beauclerk could take more liberty with him, than any body with whom I ever saw him ; but, on the other hand, Beauclerk was not spared by his respectable companion, when reproof was proper. Beauclerk had such a propensity to satire, that at one time Johnson said to him, "You never open your mouth but with intention to give pain ; and you have often given me pain, not from the power of what you said, but from seeing your intention." At another time applying to him, with a slight alteration, a line of Pope, he said,

"Thy love of folly, and thy scorn of fools—[1]

Every thing thou dost shews the one, and every thing thou say'st the other." At another time he said to him, "Thy body is all vice, and thy mind all virtue." Beauclerk not seeming to relish the compliment, Johnson said, "Nay, Sir, Alexander the Great, marching in triumph into Babylon, could not have desired to have had more said to him."

Johnson was some time with Beauclerk at his house at Windsor, where he was entertained with experiments in natural philosophy. One Sunday, when the weather was

[1] "Your taste of follies with our scorn of fools."
Pope, *Moral Essays*, ii. 276.

very fine, Beauclerk enticed him, insensibly to saunter about all the morning. They went into a churchyard, in the time of divine service, and Johnson laid himself down at his ease upon one of the tomb-stones. "Now, Sir," said Beauclerk, "you are like Hogarth's Idle Apprentice." When Johnson got his pension, Beauclerk said to him in the humorous phrase of Falstaff, "I hope you'll now purge and live cleanly like a gentleman."

One night when Beauclerk and Langton had supped at a tavern in London, and sat till about three in the morning, it came into their heads to go and knock up Johnson, and see if they could prevail on him to join them in a ramble. They rapped violently at the doors of his chambers in the Temple, till at last he appeared in his shirt, with his little black wig on the top of his head instead of a nightcap, and a poker in his hand, imagining, probably, that some ruffians were coming to attack him. When he discovered who they were, and was told their errand, he smiled, and with great good humour agreed to their proposal: "What, is it you, you dogs! I'll have a frisk with you." He was soon drest, and they sallied forth together into Covent-Garden, where the green-grocers and fruiterers were beginning to arrange their hampers, just come in from the country. Johnson made some attempts to help them; but the honest gardeners stared so at his figure and manner, and odd interference, that he soon saw his services were not relished. They then repaired to one of the neighbouring taverns, and made a bowl of that liquor called *Bishop*, which Johnson had always liked:[1] while in joyous contempt of sleep, from which he had been roused, he repeated the festive lines,

> "Short, O short then be thy reign,
> And give us to the world again!"[2]

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[1] He has enshrined it in his Dictionary as "A cant word for a mixture of wine, oranges, and sugar," with a reference to Swift.

[2] Mr. Langton has recollected, or Dr. Johnson repeated, the passage wrong. The lines are in Lord Lansdowne's *Drinking Song to Sleep*, and run thus:

They did not stay long, but walked down to the Thames, took a boat, and rowed to Billingsgate. Beauclerk and Johnson were so well pleased with their amusement, that they resolved to persevere in dissipation for the rest of the day: but Langton deserted them, being engaged to breakfast with some young ladies. Johnson scolded him for "leaving his social friends, to go and sit with a set of wretched *un-idea'd* girls." Garrick being told of this ramble, said to him smartly, "I heard of your frolic t'other night. You'll be in the 'Chronicle.'" Upon which Johnson afterwards observed, "*He* durst not do such a thing. His *wife* would not *let* him!"

He entered upon this year 1753 with his usual piety, as appears from the following prayer, which I transcribed from that part of his diary which he burnt a few days before his death:

"Jan. 1, 1753, N. S. which I shall use for the future.

"Almighty God, who hast continued my life to this day, grant that, by the assistance of thy Holy Spirit, I may improve the time which thou shalt grant me, to my eternal salvation. Make me to remember, to thy glory, thy judgments and thy mercies. Make me to consider the loss of my wife, whom thou hast taken from me, that it may dispose me, by thy grace, to lead the residue of my life in thy fear. Grant this, O Lord, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

He now relieved the drudgery of his Dictionary, and the melancholy of his grief, by taking an active part in the composition of the "Adventurer," in which he began to write April 10, marking his essays with the signature T, by which most of his papers in that collection are distinguished: those, however, which have that signature and also that of *Mysargyrus*, were not written by him, but, as I suppose, by Dr. Bathurst. Indeed Johnson's energy of thought and richness of language are still more decisive marks than any signature. As a proof of this, my readers, I imagine, will not doubt that Number 39,

"Short, very short be then thy reign,
For I'm in haste to laugh and drink again." B.

on sleep, is his; for it not only has the general texture and colour of his style, but the authors with whom he was peculiarly conversant are readily introduced in it in cursory allusion. The translation of a passage in Statius quoted in that paper, and marked C. B. has been erroneously ascribed to Dr. Bathurst, whose Christian name was Richard.[1] How much this amiable man contributed to the "Adventurer," cannot be known. Let me add that Hawkesworth's imitations of Johnson are sometimes so happy, that it is extremely difficult to distinguish them with certainty from the compositions of his great archetype. Hawkesworth was his closest imitator, a circumstance of which that writer would once have been proud to be told; though, when he had become elated by having risen into some degree of consequence, he, in a conversation with me, had the provoking effrontery to say he was not sensible of it.

Johnson was truly zealous for the success of the "Adventurer"; and very soon after his engaging in it, he wrote the following letter:

"TO THE REVEREND DR. JOSEPH WARTON.[2]

"DEAR SIR,

"I OUGHT to have written to you before now, but I ought to do many things which I do not; nor can I, indeed, claim any merit from this letter; for being desired by the authors and proprietor of the 'Adventurer' to look out for another hand, my thoughts necessarily fixed upon you, whose fund of literature will

[1] This is wrong. The Latin Sapphics translated by C. B. are said in the paper to have been written by Cowley, and are in his fourth book on Plants.

[2] Joseph Warton (1722—1800), son of Thomas, Professor of Poetry at Oxford, and elder brother of another Thomas who filled the same chair in his turn. Educated at Winchester, of which he was afterwards head-master, and Oriel College, Oxford. Was appointed a prebendary of St. Paul's and of Winchester. His chief works are an edition of Virgil with a translation of the Eclogues and Georgics, an edition of Pope, and an Essay on the life and genius of that poet, which is his best title to fame.

enable you to assist them, with very little interruption of your studies.

"They desire you to engage to furnish one paper a month, at two guineas a paper, which you may very readily perform. We have considered that a paper should consist of pieces of imagination, pictures of life, and disquisitions of literature. The part which depends on the imagination is very well supplied, as you will find when you read the paper; for descriptions of life, there is now a treaty almost made with an author and an authoress; and the province of criticism and literature they are very desirous to assign to the commentator on Virgil.

"I hope this proposal will not be rejected, and that the next post will bring us your compliance. I speak as one of the fraternity, though I have no part in the paper, beyond now and then a motto; but two of the writers are my particular friends, and I hope the pleasure of seeing a third united to them, will not be denied to, dear Sir, your most obedient, and most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"March 8, 1753."

The consequence of this letter was, Dr. Warton's enriching the collection with several admirable essays.

Johnson's saying "I have no part in the paper beyond now and then a motto," may seem inconsistent with his being the author of the papers marked T. But he had, at this time, written only one number; and besides, even at any after period, he might have used the same expression, considering it as a point of honour not to own them; for Mrs. Williams told me that, "As he had *given* those essays to Dr. Bathurst, who sold them at two guineas each, he never would own them; nay, he used to say he did not *write* them: but the fact was, that he *dictated* them, while Bathurst wrote." I read to him Mrs. Williams's account; he smiled, and said nothing.

I am not quite satisfied with the casuistry by which the productions of one person are thus passed upon the world for the productions of another. I allow that not only knowledge, but powers and qualities of mind may be communicated; but the actual effect of individual exertion never can be transferred, with truth, to any other than its own original cause. One person's child may be

made the child of another person by adoption, as among the Romans, or by the ancient Jewish mode of a wife having children borne to her upon her knees, by her handmaid. But these were children in a different sense from that of nature. It was clearly understood that they were not of the blood of their nominal parents. So in literary children, an author may give the profits and fame of his composition to another man, but cannot make that other the real author. A Highland gentleman, a younger branch of a family, once consulted me if he could not validly purchase the Chieftainship of his family, from the Chief who was willing to sell it. I told him it was impossible for him to acquire, by purchase, a right to be a different person from what he really was; for that the right of Chieftainship attached to the blood of primogeniture, and, therefore, was incapable of being transferred. I added, that though Esau sold his birthright, or the advantages belonging to it, he still remained the first-born of his parents; and that whatever agreement a Chief might make with any of the clan, the Heralds' Office could not admit of the metamorphosis, or with any decency attest that the younger was the elder; but I did not convince the worthy gentleman.

Johnson's papers in the "Adventurer" are very similar to those of the "Rambler"; but being rather more varied in their subjects, and being mixed with essays by other writers, upon topics more generally attractive than even the most elegant ethical discourses, the sale of the work, at first, was more extensive. Without meaning, however, to depreciate the "Adventurer," I must observe, that as the value of the "Rambler" came, in the progress of time, to be better known, it grew upon the public estimation, and that its sale has far exceeded that of any other periodical papers since the reign of Queen Anne.

In one of the books of his diary I find the following entry:

"Apr. 3, 1753. I began the second vol. of my Dictionary, room being left in the first for Preface, Grammar, and History, none of them yet begun.

"O God, who hast hitherto supported me, enable me to proceed in this labour, and in the whole task of my present state; that when I shall render up, at the last day, an account of the talent committed to me, I may receive pardon, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen."

He this year favoured Mrs. Lenox with a Dedication * to the Earl of Orrery, of her "Shakespeare Illustrated."[1]

In 1754 I can trace nothing published by him, except his numbers of the "Adventurer," and "The Life of Edward Cave,"* in the "Gentleman's Magazine" for February. In biography there can be no question that he excelled, beyond all who have attempted that species of composition; upon which, indeed, he set the highest value. To the minute selection of characteristical circum-

[1] "Mrs. Lenox, a lady now well known to the literary world, had written a novel entitled *The Life of Harriet Stuart* [supposed to be her own history], which in the spring of 1751 was ready for publication. One evening at the [Ivy Lane] Club, Johnson proposed to us the celebrating the birth of Mrs. Lenox's first literary child, as he called her book, by a whole night spent in festivity . . . . The place appointed was the Devil Tavern, and there, about the hour of eight, Mrs. Lenox and her husband, and a lady of her acquaintance, as also the club and friends to the number of near twenty assembled. The supper was elegant, and Johnson had directed that a magnificent hot apple-pie should make part of it, and this he would have stuck with bay-leaves, because, forsooth, Mrs. Lenox was an authoress, and had written verses; and further he had prepared for her a crown of laurel with which—but not till he had invoked the Muses with some ceremonies of his own invention—he encircled her brows. The night passed, as must be imagined, in pleasant conversation and harmless mirth, intermingled at different periods with the refreshments of coffee and tea. About five, Johnson's face shone with meridian splendour, though his drink had been only lemonade; but the far greater part of the company had deserted the colours of Bacchus and were with difficulty rallied to partake of a second refreshment of coffee, which was scarcely ended when the day began to dawn. This phenomenon began to put us in mind of our reckoning; but the waiters were all so overcome with sleep that it was two hours before a bill could be had, and it was not till near eight that the creaking of the street door gave the signal for our departure."—Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*.

stances, for which the ancients were remarkable, he added a philosophical research, and the most perspicuous and energetic language. Cave was certainly a man of estimable qualities, and was eminently diligent and successful in his own business, which, doubtless, entitled him to respect. But he was peculiarly fortunate in being recorded by Johnson; who, of the narrow life of a printer and publisher, without any digressions or adventitious circumstances, has made an interesting and agreeable narrative.

The Dictionary, we may believe, afforded Johnson full occupation this year. As it approached to its conclusion, he probably worked with redoubled vigour, as seamen increase their exertion and alacrity when they have a near prospect of their haven.

Lord Chesterfield, to whom Johnson had paid the high compliment of addressing to his Lordship the "Plan" of his Dictionary, had behaved to him in such a manner as to excite his contempt and indignation. The world has been for many years amused with a story confidently told, and as confidently repeated with additional circumstances, that a sudden disgust was taken by Johnson upon occasion of his having been one day kept long in waiting in his Lordship's antechamber, for which the reason assigned was, that he had company with him; and that at last, when the door opened, out walked Colley Cibber; and that Johnson was so violently provoked when he found for whom he had been so long excluded, that he went away in a passion, and never would return. I remember having mentioned this story to George Lord Lyttelton, who told me, he was very intimate with Lord Chesterfield; and holding it as a well-known truth, defended Lord Chesterfield by saying, that "Cibber, who had been introduced familiarly by the back-stairs, had probably not been there above ten minutes." It may seem strange even to entertain a doubt concerning a story so long and so widely current, and thus implicitly adopted, if not sanctioned, by the authority which I have mentioned; but Johnson himself assured me, that there was not the least foundation for it. He told me, that there never was

any particular incident which produced a quarrel between Lord Chesterfield and him; but that his Lordship's continued neglect was the reason why he resolved to have no connexion with him. When the Dictionary was upon the eve of publication, Lord Chesterfield, who, it is said, had flattered himself with expectations that Johnson would dedicate the work to him, attempted, in a courtly manner, to soothe and insinuate himself with the Sage, conscious, as it should seem, of the cold indifference with which he had treated its learned author; and farther attempted to conciliate him, by writing two papers in "The World,"[1] in recommendation of the work; and it must be confessed, that they contain some studied compliments, so finely turned, that if there had been no previous offence, it is probable that Johnson would have been highly delighted. Praise, in general, was pleasing to him; but by praise from a man of rank and elegant accomplishments, he was peculiarly gratified.

His Lordship says:

"I think the public in general, and the republic of letters in particular, are greatly obliged to Mr. Johnson, for having undertaken and executed so great and desirable a work. Perfection is not to be expected from man; but if we are to judge by the various works of Mr. Johnson already published, we have good reason to believe, that he will bring this as near to perfection as any man could do. The 'Plan' of it, which he published some years ago, seems to me to be a proof of it. Nothing can be more rationally imagined, or more accurately and elegantly expressed. I therefore recommend the previous perusal of it to all those who intend to buy the Dictionary, and who, I suppose, are all those who can afford it."

* * * * * *

"It must be owned, that our language is, at present, in a state of anarchy, and hitherto, perhaps, it may not have been the worse for it. During our free and open trade, many words and expressions have been imported, adopted, and naturalized from other

[1] *The World* was published weekly from Jan. 1753 to Dec. 1765. Besides Lord Chesterfield, Lord Cork and Horace Walpole were among the contributors. Chesterfield's two papers on the Dictionary were signed Adam Fitz-Adam.

languages, which have greatly enriched our own. Let it still preserve what real strength and beauty it may have borrowed from others; but let it not, like the Tarpeian maid, be overwhelmed and crushed by unnecessary foreign ornaments. The time for discrimination seems to be now come. Toleration, adoption, and naturalization have run their lengths. Good order and authority are now necessary. But where shall we find them, and, at the same time, the obedience due to them? We must have recourse to the old Roman expedient in times of confusion, and choose a dictator. Upon this principle, I give my vote for Mr. Johnson to fill that great and arduous post. And I hereby declare, that I make a total surrender of all my rights and privileges in the English language, as a free-born British subject, to the said Mr. Johnson, during the term of his dictatorship. Nay more, I will not only obey him like an old Roman, as my dictator, but, like a modern Roman, I will implicitly believe in him as my Pope, and hold him to be infallible while in the chair, but no longer. More than this he cannot well require; for, I presume, that obedience can never be expected, when there is neither terror to enforce, nor interest to invite it."

* * * * * *

"But a Grammar, a Dictionary, and a History of our Language through its several stages, were still wanting at home, and importunately called for from abroad. Mr. Johnson's labours will now, and, I dare say, very fully supply that want, and greatly contribute to the farther spreading of our language in other countries. Learners were discouraged, by finding no standard to resort to; and, consequently, thought it incapable of any. They will now be undeceived and encouraged."

This courtly device failed of its effect. Johnson, who thought that "all was false and hollow," despised the honeyed words, and was even indignant that Lord Chesterfield should, for a moment, imagine, that he could be the dupe of such an artifice. His expression to me concerning Lord Chesterfield, upon this occasion, was, "Sir, after making great professions, he had, for many years, taken no notice of me; but when my Dictionary was coming out, he fell a scribbling in 'The World' about it. Upon which, I wrote him a letter expressed in civil terms, but such as might shew him that I did not mind what he said or wrote, and that I had done with him."

This is that celebrated letter of which so much has been said, and about which curiosity has been so long excited, without being gratified. I for many years solicited Johnson to favour me with a copy of it, that so excellent a composition might not be lost to posterity. He delayed from time to time to give it me;[1] till at last in 1781, when we were on a visit at Mr. Dilly's, at Southill in Bedfordshire, he was pleased to dictate it to me from memory. He afterwards found among his papers a copy of it, which he had dictated to Mr. Baretti, with its title and corrections, in his own handwriting. This he gave to Mr. Langton; adding, that if it were to come into print, he wished it to be from that copy. By Mr. Langton's kindness, I am enabled to enrich my work with a perfect transcript of what the world has so eagerly desired to see.

"TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE EARL OF CHESTERFIELD.

February 7, 1755.

"My Lord,

"I HAVE been lately informed, by the proprietor of 'The World,' that two papers, in which my Dictionary is recommended to the public, were written by your Lordship. To be so distinguished, is an honour, which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

"When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your Lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address, and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *Le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre*;—that

[1] Dr. Johnson appeared to have had a remarkable delicacy with respect to the circulation of this letter; for Dr. Douglas, Bishop of Salisbury, informs me, that having many years ago pressed him to be allowed to read it to the second Lord Hardwicke, who was very desirous to hear it (promising at the same time, that no copy of it should be taken), Johnson seemed much pleased that it had attracted the attention of a nobleman of such a respectable character: but, after pausing some time, declined to comply with the request, saying, with a smile, "No, Sir; I have hurt the dog too much already;" or words to that purpose. B.

I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your Lordship in public, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

"Seven years, my Lord, have now past, since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it, at last, to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance,[1] one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a Patron before.

"The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.[2]

"Is not a Patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it;[3] till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a Patron, which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

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[1] The following note is subjoined by Mr. Langton. "Dr. Johnson, when he gave me this copy of his letter, desired that I would annex to it his information to me, that whereas it is said in the letter that 'no assistance has been received,' he did once receive from Lord Chesterfield the sum of 10*l.*, but as that was so inconsiderable a sum, he thought the mention of it could not properly find a place in a letter of the kind that this was." B.

[2] Virg. Ecl. viii. 44–6.

[3] In this passage Dr. Johnson evidently alludes to the loss of his wife. We find the same tender recollection recurring to his mind upon innumerable occasions; and, perhaps no man ever more forcibly felt the truth of the sentiment so elegantly expressed by my friend Mr. Malone, in his Prologue to Mr. Jephson's tragedy of *Julia*:

> "Vain—wealth, and fame, and fortune's fostering care,
> If no fond breast the splendid blessings share;
> And, each day's bustling pageantry once past,
> There, only there, our bliss is found at last." B.

"Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation, my Lord, Your Lordship's most humble, most obedient servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON." [1]

"While this was the talk of the town," says Dr. Adams, in a letter to me, "I happened to visit Dr. Warburton, who finding that I was acquainted with Johnson, desired me earnestly to carry his compliments to him, and to tell him, that he honoured him for his manly behaviour in rejecting these condescensions of Lord Chesterfield, and for resenting the treatment he had received from him with a proper spirit. Johnson was visibly pleased with this compliment, for he had always a high opinion of Warburton." [2] Indeed, the force of mind which appeared in this letter, was congenial with that which Warburton himself amply possessed.

There is a curious minute circumstance which struck me, in comparing the various editions of Johnson's Imitations of Juvenal. In the tenth satire one of the

[1] Upon comparing this copy with that which Dr. Johnson dictated to me from recollection, the variations are found to be so slight, that this must be added to the many other proofs which he gave of the wonderful extent and accuracy of his memory. To gratify the curious in composition, I have deposited both the copies in the British Museum. B.

[2] Soon after Edwards's *Canons of Criticism* came out, Johnson was dining at Tonson the Bookseller's, with Hayman the Painter and some more company. Hayman related to Sir Joshua Reynolds, that the conversation having turned upon Edwards's book, the gentlemen praised it much, and Johnson allowed its merit. But when they went farther, and appeared to put that author upon a level with Warburton, "Nay," said Johnson, "he has given him some smart hits to be sure; but there is no proportion between the two men; they must not be named together. A fly, Sir, may sting a stately horse and make him wince; but one is but an insect, and the other is a horse still." B. See Johnson's Preface to his edition of *Shakespeare*.

couplets upon the vanity of wishes even for literary distinction stood thus :

> "Yet think what ills the scholar's life assail,
> Toil, envy, want, the *garret*, and the jail."

But after experiencing the uneasiness which Lord Chesterfield's fallacious patronage made him feel, he dismissed the word *garret* from the sad group, and in all the subsequent editions the line stands

> "Toil, envy, want, the *Patron*, and the jail."

That Lord Chesterfield must have been mortified by the lofty contempt, and polite, yet keen, satire with which Johnson exhibited him to himself in this letter, it is impossible to doubt. He, however, with that glossy duplicity which was his constant study, affected to be quite unconcerned. Dr. Adams mentioned to Mr. Robert Dodsley that he was sorry Johnson had written his letter to Lord Chesterfield. Dodsley, with the true feelings of trade, said "He was very sorry too ; for that he had a property in the Dictionary, to which his Lordship's patronage might have been of consequence." He then told Dr. Adams, that Lord Chesterfield had shewn him the letter. "I should have imagined," replied Dr. Adams, "that Lord Chesterfield would have concealed it." "Poh!" said Dodsley, "do you think a letter from Johnson could hurt Lord Chesterfield? Not at all, Sir. It lay upon his table, where any body might see it. He read it to me ; said, 'this man has great powers,' pointed out the severest passages, and observed how well they were expressed." This air of indifference, which imposed upon the worthy Dodsley, was certainly nothing but a specimen of that dissimulation which Lord Chesterfield inculcated as one of the most essential lessons for the conduct of life. His Lordship endeavoured to justify himself to Dodsley from the charges brought against him by Johnson ; but we may judge of the flimsiness of his defence, from his having excused his neglect of Johnson, by saying, that "He had heard he had changed his

lodgings, and did not know where he lived ;" as if there could have been the smallest difficulty to inform himself of that circumstance, by inquiring in the literary circle with which his Lordship was well acquainted, and was, indeed, himself, one of its ornaments.

Dr. Adams expostulated with Johnson, and suggested, that his not being admitted when he called on him, was probably not to be imputed to Lord Chesterfield ; for his Lordship had declared to Dodsley, that "He would have turned off the best servant he ever had, if he had known that he denied him to a man who would have been always more than welcome ;" and in confirmation of this, he insisted on Lord Chesterfield's general affability and easiness of access, especially to literary men. "Sir," said Johnson, "that is not Lord Chesterfield ; he is the proudest man this day existing." "No," said Dr. Adams, "there is one person, at least, as proud ; I think, by your own account you are the prouder man of the two." "But mine," replied Johnson instantly, "was *defensive* pride." This, as Dr. Adams well observed, was one of those happy turns for which he was so remarkably ready.

Johnson having now explicitly avowed his opinion of Lord Chesterfield, did not refrain from expressing himself concerning that nobleman with pointed freedom : "This man," said he, "I thought had been a Lord among wits ; but, I find, he is only a wit among Lords." And when his Letters to his natural son were published, he observed, that "they teach the morals of a whore, and the manners of a dancing-master."[1]

[1] That collection of letters cannot be vindicated from the serious charge, of encouraging, in some passages, one of the vices most destructive to the good order and comfort of society, which his Lordship represents as mere fashionable gallantry ; and, in others, of inculcating the base practice of dissimulation, and recommending, with disproportionate anxiety, a perpetual attention to external elegance of manners. But it must, at the same time, be allowed, that they contain many good precepts of conduct, and much genuine information upon life and manners, very happily expressed ; and that there was considerable merit in paying so much attention to the improvement of one who was dependent

The character of a "respectable Hottentot," in Lord Chesterfield's letters, has been generally understood to be meant for Johnson, and I have no doubt that it was. But I remember when the *Literary Property* of those letters was contested in the Court of Session in Scotland, and Mr. Henry Dundas,[1] one of the counsel for the proprietors, read this character as an exhibition of Johnson, Sir David Dalrymple, Lord Hailes, one of the Judges, maintained, with some warmth, that it was not intended as a portrait of Johnson, but of a late noble Lord, distinguished for abstruse science. I have heard Johnson himself talk of the character, and say that it was meant for George Lord Lyttelton, in which I could by no means agree; for his Lordship had nothing of that violence which is a conspicuous feature in the composition. Finding that my illustrious friend could bear to have it supposed that it might be meant for him, I said, laughingly, that there was one trait which unquestionably did not belong to him; "he throws his meat any where but down his throat." "Sir," said he, "Lord Chesterfield never saw me eat in his life."

On the 6th of March came out Lord Bolingbroke's works, published by Mr. David Mallet. The wild and pernicious ravings, under the name of "Philosophy," which were thus ushered into the world, gave great offence

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upon his Lordship's protection; it has, probably, been exceeded in no instance by the most exemplary parent; and though I can by no means approve of confounding the distinction between lawful and illicit offspring, which is, in effect, insulting the civil establishment of our country, to look no higher; I cannot help thinking it laudable to be kindly attentive to those, of whose existence we have, in any way, been the cause. Mr. Stanhope's character has been unjustly represented as diametrically opposite to what Lord Chesterfield wished him to be. He has been called dull, gross, and awkward: but I knew him at Dresden, when he was Envoy to that court; and though he could not boast of the *graces*, he was, in truth, a sensible, civil, well-behaved man. B.

[1] Now, [1792] one of his Majesty's principal Secretaries of State. B. Afterwards Viscount Melville; a great friend of Sir Walter Scott.

to all well-principled men. Johnson, hearing of their tendency, which nobody disputed, was roused with a just indignation, and pronounced this memorable sentence upon the noble author and his editor. "Sir, he was a scoundrel, and a coward: a scoundrel for charging a blunderbuss against religion and morality; a coward, because he had no resolution to fire it off himself, but left half a crown to a beggarly Scotchman, to draw the trigger after his death!" Garrick, who I can attest from my own knowledge, had his mind seasoned with pious reverence, and sincerely disapproved of the infidel writings of several, whom in the course of his almost universal gay intercourse with men of eminence, he treated with external civility, distinguished himself upon this occasion. Mr. Pelham having died on the very day on which Lord Bolingbroke's works came out, he wrote an elegant Ode on his death, beginning,

"Let others hail the rising sun,
I bow to that whose course is run;"

in which is the following stanza:

"The same sad morn, to Church and State
(So for our sins 'twas fix'd by fate),
A double stroke was given;
Black as the whirlwinds of the North,
St. John's fell genius issued forth,
And Pelham fled to heaven."

Johnson this year found an interval of leisure to make an excursion to Oxford, for the purpose of consulting the libraries there. Of this, and of many interesting circumstances concerning him, during a part of his life when he conversed but little with the world, I am enabled to give a particular account, by the liberal communications of the Reverend Mr. Thomas Warton,[1] who obligingly furnished

[1] Thomas Warton (1728—90), younger brother of Joseph, Fellow of Trinity College, Oxford, and Professor of Poetry in the University 1758—68. He was appointed Poet Laureate in 1785 on the death of Whitehead. His chief work is a *History of English Poetry*, which was unfinished at his death.

me with several of our common friend's letters, which he illustrated with notes. These I shall insert in their proper places.

"TO THE REVEREND MR. THOMAS WARTON.

"SIR,

"IT is but an ill return for the book with which you were pleased to favour me,[1] to have delayed my thanks for it till now. I am too apt to be negligent; but I can never deliberately shew my disrespect to a man of your character: and I now pay you a very honest acknowledgement, for the advancement of the literature of our native country. You have shewn to all, who shall hereafter attempt the study of our ancient authors, the way to success; by directing them to the perusal of the books which those authors had read. Of this method, Hughes,[2] and men much greater than Hughes, seem never to have thought. The reason why the authors, which are yet read, of the sixteenth century, are so little understood, is, that they are read alone; and no help is borrowed from those who lived with them, or before them. Some part of this ignorance I hope to remove by my book,[3] which now draws towards its end; but which I cannot finish to my mind without visiting the libraries of Oxford, which I therefore hope to see in a fortnight.[4] I know not how long I shall stay, or where I shall lodge: but shall be sure to look for you at my arrival, and we shall easily settle the rest. I am, dear Sir, your most obedient, &c.

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"[London] July 16, 1754."

Of his conversation while at Oxford at this time, Mr. Warton preserved and communicated to me the following memorial, which, though not written with all the care and attention which that learned and elegant writer bestowed

[1] *Observations on Spenser's Fairy Queen*, the first edition of which was now published. *Warton.* B.

[2] Hughes published an edition of Spenser. *Warton.* B.

[3] His Dictionary. *Warton.* B.

[4] He came to Oxford within a fortnight, and stayed about five weeks. He lodged at a house called Kettel-hall, near Trinity College. But during this visit at Oxford, he collected nothing in the libraries for his Dictionary. *Warton.* B. Kettel-Hall (once known as Perles, Peverels, or Perilous Hall) was founded in 1615 by Dr. Ralph Kettel, President of Trinity College, as a subsidiary building to that Society. It is now a private house.

on those compositions which he intended for the public eye, is so happily expressed in an easy style, that I should injure it by any alteration:

"When Johnson came to Oxford in 1754, the long vacation was beginning, and most people were leaving the place. This was the first time of his being there, after quitting the University. The next morning after his arrival he wished to see his old College, *Pembroke*. I went with him. He was highly pleased to find all the College-servants which he had left there still remaining, particularly a very old butler; and expressed great satisfaction at being recognised by them, and conversed with them familiarly. He waited on the master, Dr. Radcliffe, who received him very coldly. Johnson at least expected, that the master would order a copy of his Dictionary now near publication; but the master did not choose to talk on the subject, never asked Johnson to dine, nor even to visit him, while he stayed at Oxford. After we had left the lodgings, Johnson said to me, '*There* lives a man, who lives by the revenues of literature, and will not move a finger to support it. If I come to live at Oxford, I shall take up my abode at Trinity.' We then called on the Reverend Mr. Meeke, one of the Fellows, and of Johnson's standing. Here was a most cordial greeting on both sides. On leaving him, Johnson said, 'I used to think Meeke had excellent parts, when we were boys together at the College: but, alas!

'"Lost in a convent's solitary gloom!"—

I remember, at the classical lecture in the Hall, I could not bear Meeke's superiority, and I tried to sit as far from him as I could, that I might not hear him construe.'

"As we were leaving the College, he said, 'Here I translated Pope's "Messiah." Which do you think is the best line in it?—My own favourite is,

'"Mittit aromaticas vallis Saronica nubes."'

I told him, I thought it a very sonorous hexameter. I did not tell him, it was not in the Virgilian style. He much regretted that his *first* tutor was dead; for whom he seemed to retain the greatest regard. He said, 'I once had been a whole morning sliding in Christ-Church meadows and missed his lecture in logic. After dinner he sent for me to his room. I expected a sharp rebuke for my idleness, and went with a beating heart. When we were seated, he told me he had sent for me to drink a glass of wine with him, and to tell me, he was *not* angry with me for missing his lecture. This was, in fact, a most severe reprimand. Some more of the

boys were then sent for, and we spent a very pleasant afternoon.' Besides Mr. Meeke, there was only one other Fellow of Pembroke now resident: from both of whom Johnson received the greatest civilities during this visit, and they pressed him very much to have a room in the College.

"In the course of this visit (1754) Johnson and I walked three or four times to Ellsfield, a village beautifully situated about three miles from Oxford, to see Mr. Wise, Radclivian librarian, with whom Johnson was much pleased. At this place, Mr. Wise had fitted up a house and gardens, in a singular manner, but with great taste. Here was an excellent library; particularly, a valuable collection of books in Northern literature, with which Johnson was often very busy. One day Mr. Wise read to us a dissertation which he was preparing for the press, entitled, 'A History and Chronology of the fabulous Ages.' Some old Divinities of Thrace, related to the Titans, and called the CABIRI, made a very important part of the theory of this piece; and in conversation afterwards, Mr. Wise talked much of his CABIRI. As we returned to Oxford in the evening, I outwalked Johnson, and he cried out *Sufflamina*, a Latin word which came from his mouth with peculiar grace, and was as much as to say, *Put on your drag chain.* Before we got home I again walked too fast for him; and he now cried out, 'Why, you walk as if you were pursued by all the CABIRI in a body.' In an evening we frequently took long walks from Oxford into the country, returning to supper. Once, in our way home, we viewed the ruins of the abbeys of Oseney and Rewley, near Oxford. After at least an hour's silence, Johnson said, 'I viewed them with indignation!' We had then a long conversation on Gothic buildings; and in talking of the form of old halls, he said, 'In these halls the fire-place was anciently always in the middle of the room, till the Whigs removed it on one side.'— About this time there had been an execution of two or three criminals at Oxford on a Monday. Soon afterwards, one day at dinner, I was saying that Mr. Swinton, the chaplain of the jail, and also a frequent preacher before the University, a learned man, but often thoughtless and absent, preached the condemnation sermon on repentance, before the convicts, on the preceding day, Sunday; and that in the close he told his audience, that he should give them the remainder of what he had to say on the subject, the next Lord's Day. Upon which, one of our company, a Doctor of Divinity, and a plain matter-of-fact man, by way of offering an apology for Mr. Swinton, gravely remarked, that he had probably preached the same sermon before the University: 'Yes, Sir,' says Johnson, 'but the University were not to be hanged the next morning.'

"I forgot to observe before, that when he left Mr. Meeke (as I have told above), he added, 'About the same time of life, Meeke was left behind at Oxford to feed on a Fellowship, and I went to London to get my living: now, Sir, see the difference of our literary characters!'"

The following letter was written by Dr. Johnson to Mr. Chambers, of Lincoln College, afterwards Sir Robert Chambers, one of the judges in India:[1]

"TO MR. CHAMBERS, OF LINCOLN COLLEGE.

"DEAR SIR,

"THE commission which I delayed to trouble you with at your departure, I am now obliged to send you; and beg that you will be so kind as to carry it to Mr. Warton, of Trinity, to whom I should have written immediately, but that I know not if he be yet come back to Oxford.

"In the Catalogue of MSS. of Gr. Brit. see vol. I. pag. 18. MSS. Bodl. MARTYRIUM XV *martyrum sub Juliano, auctore Theophylacto.*

"It is desired that Mr. Warton will inquire, and send word, what will be the cost of transcribing this manuscript.

"Vol. II. p. 32. Num. 1022. 58. COLL. NOV.—*Commentaria in Acta Apostol.—Comment. in Septem Epistolas Catholicas.*

"He is desired to tell what is the age of each of these manuscripts: and what it will cost to have a transcript of the two first pages of each.

"If Mr. Warton be not in Oxford, you may try if you can get it done by any body else; or stay till he comes, according to your own convenience. It is for an Italian *literato.*

"The answer is to be directed to his Excellency Mr. Zon, Venetian Resident, Soho-square.

"I hope, dear Sir, that you do not regret the change of London for Oxford. Mr. Baretti is well, and Miss Williams;[2] and we shall all be glad to hear from you, whenever you shall be so kind as to write to, Sir, your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"Nov. 21, 1754."

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[1] Communicated by the Reverend Mr. Thomas Warton, who had the original. B.

[2] I presume she was a relation of Mr. Zachariah Williams, who died in his eighty-third year, July 12, 1755. When Dr. Johnson was with me at Oxford, in 1755, he gave to the Bodleian Library

The degree of Master of Arts, which, it has been observed, could not be obtained for him at an early period of his life, was now considered as an honour of considerable importance, in order to grace the title-page of his Dictionary; and his character in the literary world being by this time deservedly high, his friend thought that, if proper exertions were made, the University of Oxford would pay him the compliment.

"TO THE REVEREND MR. THOMAS WARTON.

"DEAR SIR,

"I AM extremely obliged to you and to Mr. Wise, for the uncommon care which you have taken of my interest:[1] if you can accomplish your kind design, I shall certainly take me a little habitation among you.

"The books which I promised to Mr. Wise, I[2] have not been able to procure: but I shall send him a Finnick Dictionary, the only copy, perhaps, in England, which was presented me by a learned Swede: but I keep it back, that it may make a set of my own books of the new edition, with which I shall accompany it, more welcome. You will assure him of my gratitude.

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a thin quarto of twenty-one pages, a work in Italian, with an English translation on the opposite page. The English title-page is this: *An Account of an Attempt to ascertain the Longitude at Sea, by an exact Variation of the Magnetical Needle, &c.* By Zachariah Williams. London, printed for Dodsley, 1755. The English translation, from the strongest internal marks, is unquestionably the work of Johnson. In a blank leaf, Johnson has written the age, and time of death, of the author Z. Williams, as I have said above. On another blank leaf, is pasted a paragraph from a newspaper, of the death and character of Williams, which is plainly written by Johnson. He was very anxious about placing this book in the Bodleian: and, for fear of any omission or mistake, he entered, in the great Catalogue, the title-page of it with his own hand. *Warton.* B. There is a mistake here for which see p. 217.

[1] In procuring him the degree of Master of Arts by diploma at Oxford. *Warton.* B.

[2] Lately fellow of Trinity College, and at this time Radclivian librarian, at Oxford. He was a man of very considerable learning, and eminently skilled in Roman and Anglo-Saxon antiquities. He died in 1767. *Warton.* B.

"Poor dear Collins![1]—Would a letter give him any pleasure? I have a mind to write.

"I am glad of your hindrance in your Spenserian design,[2] yet I would not have it delayed. Three hours a day stolen from sleep and amusement will produce it. Let a Servitor[3] transcribe the quotations, and interleave them with references, to save time. This will shorten the work and lessen the fatigue.

"Can I do any thing to promoting the diploma? I would not be wanting to co-operate with your kindness; of which, whatever be the effect, I shall be, dear Sir, your most obliged, &c.

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"[London,] Nov. 28, 1754."

"TO THE SAME.

"DEAR SIR,

"I AM extremely sensible of the favour done me, both by Mr. Wise and yourself. The book[4] cannot, I think, be printed in less than six weeks nor probably so soon; and I will keep back the title-page, for such an insertion as you seem to promise me. Be pleased to let me know what money I shall send you, for bearing the expense of the affair; and I will take care that you may have it ready at your hand.

"I had lately the favour of a letter from your brother, with some account of poor Collins, for whom I am much concerned. I have a notion, that by very great temperance, or more properly abstinence, he may yet recover.

"There is an old English and Latin book of poems by Barclay, called 'The Ship of Fools'; at the end of which are a number of *Eglogues*; so he writes it, from *Egloga*, which are probably the first in our language. If you cannot find the book, I will get Mr. Dodsley to send it you.

"I shall be extremely glad to hear from you again, to know, if

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[1] Collins (the poet) was at this time at Oxford, on a visit to Mr. Warton; but labouring under the most deplorable languor of body, and dejection of mind. *Warton.* B. He died in 1756, in his thirty-sixth year.

[2] Of publishing a volume of observations on the best of Spenser's works. It was hindered by my taking pupils in this College. *Warton.* B.

[3] Young students of the lowest rank at Oxford are so called. *Warton.* B.

[4] His Dictionary. *Warton.* B.

the affair proceeds.[1] I have mentioned it to none of my friends, for fear of being laughed at for my disappointment.

"You know poor Mr. Dodsley has lost his wife; I believe he is much affected. I hope he will not suffer so much as I yet suffer for the loss of mine.

Οἴμοι· τί δ' οἴμοι; θνῆτα γὰρ πεπόνθαμεν.[2]

I have ever since seemed to myself broken off from mankind; a kind of solitary wanderer in the wild of life, without any direction, or fixed point of view: a gloomy gazer on the world to which I have little relation. Yet I would endeavour, by the help of you and your brother, to supply the want of closer union, by friendship: and hope to have long the pleasure of being, dear Sir, most affectionately yours,

"SAM. JOHNSON

"[London,] Dec. 21, 1754."

In 1755 we behold him to great advantage; his degree of Master of Arts conferred upon him, his Dictionary published, his correspondence animated, his benevolence exercised.

"TO THE REVEREND MR. THOMAS WARTON.

"DEAR SIR,

"I WROTE to you some weeks ago, but believe did not direct accurately, and therefore know not whether you had my letter. I would, likewise, write to your brother, but know not where to find him. I now begin to see land, after having wandered, according to Mr. Warburton's phrase, in this vast sea of words. What reception I shall meet with on the shore, I know not; whether the sound of bells, and acclamations of the people, which Ariosto talks of in his last Canto, or a general murmur of dislike, I know not: whether I shall find upon the coast a Calypso that will court, or a Polypheme that will resist. But if Polypheme comes, have at his eye. I hope, however, the critics will let me be at peace; for though I do not much fear their skill and strength, I am a little afraid of myself, and would not willingly feel so much ill-will in my bosom as literary quarrels are apt to excite.

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[1] Of the degree at Oxford. *Warton.* B.

[2] A fragment from the lost *Bellerophon* of Euripides. "Alas! yet why alas? we have but suffered the common lot of mortality."

"Mr. Baretti is about a work for which he is in great want of Crescimbeni, which you may have again when you please.

"There is nothing considerable done or doing among us here. We are not, perhaps, as innocent as villagers, but most of us seem to be as idle. I hope, however, you are busy; and should be glad to know what you are doing. I am, dearest Sir, your humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"[London,] Feb. 4, 1755."

"TO THE SAME.

"DEAR SIR,

"I RECEIVED your letter this day, with great sense of the favour that has been done me;[1] for which I return my most sincere thanks: and entreat you to pay to Mr. Wise such returns as I ought to make for so much kindness so little deserved.

"I sent Mr. Wise the Lexicon, and afterwards wrote to him; but know not whether he had either the book or letter. Be so good as to contrive to inquire.

"But why does my dear Mr. Warton tell me nothing of himself? Where hangs the new volume?[2] Can I help? Let not the past labour be lost, for want of a little more; but snatch what time you can from the Hall, and the pupils, and the coffee-house, and the parks, and complete your design. I am, dear Sir, &c.

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"[London,] Feb. 4, 1755."

"TO THE SAME.

"DEAR SIR,

"I HAD a letter last week from Mr. Wise, but have yet heard nothing from you, nor know in what state my affair[3] stands; of which I beg you to inform me, if you can, to-morrow, by the return of the post.

"Mr. Wise sends me word, that he has not had the Finnick Lexicon yet, which I sent some time ago; and if he has it not, you must inquire after it. However, do not let your letter stay for that.

"Your brother, who is a better correspondent than you, and not

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[1] His degree had now past, according to the usual form, the suffrages of the heads of Colleges; but was not yet finally granted by the University. It was carried without a single dissentient voice. *Warton.* B.

[2] On Spenser. *Warton.* B.

[3] Of the degree. *Warton.* B.

much better, sends me word, that your pupils keep you in College: but do they keep you from writing too? Let them, at least, give you time to write to, dear Sir, your most affectionate, &c.

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"[London,] Feb. 13, 1755."

"TO THE SAME.

"DEAR SIR,

"DR. KING[1] was with me a few minutes before your letter; this, however, is the first instance in which your kind intentions to me have ever been frustrated.[2] I have now the full effect of your care and benevolence; and am far from thinking it a slight honour, or a small advantage; since it will put the enjoyment of your conversation more frequently in the power of, dear Sir, your most obliged and affectionate,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"P. S. I have enclosed a letter to the Vice-Chancellor,[3] which you will read; and, if you like it, seal and give him.

"[London,] Feb. 1755."

As the Public will doubtless be pleased to see the whole progress of this well-earned academical honour, I shall insert the Chancellor of Oxford's letter to the University,[4] the diploma, and Johnson's letter of thanks to the Vice-Chancellor.

"*To the Reverend Dr.* HUDDESFORD, Vice-Chancellor *of the* University *of* Oxford; *to be communicated to the Heads of Houses, and proposed in Convocation.*

"MR. VICE-CHANCELLOR, AND GENTLEMEN,

"MR. SAMUEL JOHNSON, who was formerly of Pembroke College, having very eminently distinguished himself by the publication of a series of essays, excellently calculated to form the manners

[1] Principal of Saint Mary Hall at Oxford. He brought with him the diploma from Oxford. *Warton.* B.

[2] I suppose Johnson means that my *kind intention* of being the *first* to give him the good news of the degree being granted was *frustrated*, because Dr. King brought it before my intelligence arrived. *Warton.* B.

[3] Dr. Huddesford, President of Trinity College. *Warton.* B.

[4] Extracted from the Convocation Register. Oxford. B.

of the people, and in which the cause of religion and morality is every where maintained by the strongest powers of argument and language; and who shortly intends to publish a Dictionary of the English Tongue formed on a new plan, and executed with the greatest labour and judgment; I persuade myself that I shall act agreeable to the sentiments of the whole University, in desiring that it may be proposed in convocation to confer on him the degree of Master of Arts by diploma, to which I readily give my consent; and am,

"Mr. Vice-Chancellor, and Gentlemen,

"Your affectionate friend and servant,

"ARRAN.

"Grosvenor-street, Feb. 4, 1755."

Term. Sti. Hilarii. 1755.

"DIPLOMA MAGISTRI JOHNSON.

"CANCELLARIUS, Magistri, et Scholares Universitatis Oxoniensis omnibus ad quos hoc præsens scriptum pervenerit, salutem in Domino sempiternam.

"Cum eum in finem gradus academici a majoribus nostris instituti fuerint, ut viri ingenio et doctrina præstantes titulis quoque præter cæteros insignirentur; cumque vir doctissimus Samuel Johnson e Collegio Pembrochiensi, scriptis suis popularium mores informantibus dudum literato orbi innotuerit; quin et linguæ patriæ tum ornandæ tum stabiliendæ (Lexicon scilicet Anglicanum summo studio, summo a se judicio congestum propediem editurus) etiam nunc utilissimam impendat operam; Nos igitur Cancellarius, Magistri, et Scholares antedicti, ne virum de literis humanioribus optime meritum diutius inhonoratum prætereamus, in solenni Convocatione Doctorum, Magistrorum, Regentium, et non Regentium, decimo die Mensis Februarii Anno Domini Millesimo Septingentesimo Quinquagesimo quinto habita, præfatum virum Samuelem Johnson (conspirantibus omnium suffragiis) Magistrum in Artibus renunciavimus et constituimus; eumque, virtute præsentis diplomatis, singulis juribus, privilegiis et honoribus ad istum gradum quaqua pertinentibus frui et gaudere jussimus.

"In cujus rei testimonium sigillum Universitatis Oxoniensis præsentibus apponi fecimus.

"Datum in Domo nostræ Convocationis die 20° mensis Feb. Anno Dom. prædicto.

"Diploma supra scriptum per Registrarium lectum erat, et ex decreto venerabilis Domus communi Universitatis sigillo munitum."[1]

[1] The original is in my possession. B.

"Londini, 4to. Cal. Mart. 1755.

"VIRO REVERENDO - - - - HUDDESFORD, S. T. P. UNIVERSITATIS OXONIENSIS VICE-CANCELLARIO DIGNISSIMO, S. P. D.

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"INGRATUS plane et tibi et mihi videar, nisi quanto me gaudio affecerint, quos nuper mihi honores (te, credo, auctore,) decrevit Senatus Academicus, literarum, quo tamen nihil levius, officio significem: ingratus etiam, nisi comitatem, qua vir eximius[1] mihi vestri testimonium amoris in manus tradidit, agnoscam et laudem. Si quid est, unde rei tam gratæ accedat gratia, hoc ipso magis mihi placet, quod eo tempore in ordines Academicos denuo cooptatus sim, quo tuam imminuere auctoritatem, famamque Oxonii lædere, omnibus modis conantur homines vafri, nec tamen acuti: quibus ego, prout viro umbratico licuit, semper restiti, semper restiturus. Qui enim, inter has rerum procellas, vel tibi vel Academiæ defuerit, illum virtuti et literis, sibique et posteris, defuturum existimo. Vale."

"TO THE REVEREND MR. THOMAS WARTON.

"DEAR SIR,

"AFTER I received my diploma, I wrote you a letter of thanks, with a letter to the Vice-Chancellor, and sent another to Mr. Wise: but have heard from nobody since, and begin to think myself forgotten. It is true, I sent you a double letter, and you may fear an expensive correspondent; but I would have taken it kindly, if you had returned it treble: and what is a double letter to a *petty king*, that having *fellowship and fines*, can sleep without a *Modus in his head?*[2]

"Dear Mr. Warton, let me hear from you, and tell me something, I care not what, so I hear it but from you. Something, I

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[1] We may conceive what a high gratification it must have been to Johnson to receive his diploma from the hands of the great Dr. KING, whose principles were so congenial with his own. B. Dr. King was a red-hot Jacobite. He claimed in his *Anecdotes* to have been presented to Prince Charles Edward on his secret visit to England in 1750 (1753), and spoke of the Duke of Cumberland after the rebellion of 1745 as a man "who fears all things but God."

[2] The words in italics are allusions to passages in Mr. Warton's poem, called *The Progress of Discontent*, now lately published. *Warton.* B.

will tell you :—I hope to see my Dictionary bound and lettered next week ;—*vastâ mole superbus*. And I have a great mind to come to Oxford at Easter ; but you will not invite me. Shall I come uninvited, or stay here where nobody perhaps would miss me if I went ? A hard choice ! But such is the world to, dear Sir, yours, &c.

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"[London,] March 20, 1755."

"TO THE SAME.

"DEAR SIR,

"THOUGH not to write, when a man can write so well, is an offence sufficiently heinous, yet I shall pass it by. I am very glad that the Vice-Chancellor was pleased with my note. I shall impatiently expect you at London, that we may consider what to do next. I intend in the winter to open a *Bibliotheque*, and remember, that you are to subscribe a sheet a year : let us try, likewise, if we cannot persuade your brother to subscribe another. My book is now coming *in luminis oras*. What will be its fate I know not, nor think much, because thinking is to no purpose. It must stand the censure of the *great vulgar and the small ;* of those that understand it, and that understand it not. But in all this, I suffer not alone ; every writer has the same difficulties, and, perhaps, every writer talks of them more than he thinks.

"You will be pleased to make my compliments to all my friends ; and be so kind, at every idle hour, as to remember, dear Sir, yours, &c.

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"[London,] March 25, 1755."

Dr. Adams told me, that this scheme of a *Bibliotheque* was a serious one : for upon his visiting him one day, he found his parlour floor covered with parcels of foreign and English literary journals, and he told Dr. Adams he meant to undertake a Review. "How, Sir," said Dr. Adams, "can you think of doing it alone ? All branches of knowledge must be considered in it. Do you know Mathematics ? Do you know Natural History ?" Johnson answered, "Why, Sir, I must do as well as I can. My chief purpose is to give my countrymen a view of what is doing in literature upon the continent ; and I shall have, in a good measure, the choice of my subject, for I shall select such books as I best understand." Dr. Adams suggested,

that as Dr. Maty had just then finished his *Bibliotheque Britannique*, which was a well-executed work, giving foreigners an account of British publications, he might with great advantage assume him as an assistant. "He," said Johnson, "the little black dog! I'd throw him into the Thames." The scheme, however, was dropped.[1]

In one of his little memorandum-books I find the following hints for his intended Review or Literary Journal: "*The Annals of Literature, foreign as well as domestic.* Imitate Le Clerk—Bayle—Barbeyrac. Infelicity of Journals in England. Works of the learned. We cannot take in all. Sometimes copy from foreign Journalists. Always tell."

"TO DR. BIRCH.

"March 29, 1755.

"SIR,

"I HAVE sent some parts of my Dictionary, such as were at hand, for your inspection. The favour which I beg is, that if you do not like them, you will say nothing. I am, Sir, your most affectionate humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"TO MR. SAMUEL JOHNSON.

"Norfolk-street, April 23, 1755.

"SIR,

"THE part of your Dictionary which you have favoured me with the sight of has given me such an idea of the whole, that I most sincerely congratulate the public upon the acquisition of a work long wanted, and now executed with an industry, accuracy, and judgment, equal to the importance of the subject. You might, perhaps, have chosen one in which your genius would have appeared to more advantage, but you could not have fixed upon any other in which your labours would have done such substantial service to the present age and to posterity. I am

[1] Dr. Matthew Maty (1718—76) was a native of Holland who settled in England in 1740. He was appointed Secretary to the Royal Society and afterwards Principal Librarian to the British Museum. Johnson's contempt for him is explained by his being a friend of Chesterfield, whose works he published. Gibbon had a high opinion of his talents.

glad that your health has supported the application necessary to the performance of so vast a task ; and can undertake to promise you as one (though perhaps the only) reward of it, the approbation and thanks of every well-wisher to the honour of the English language. I am, with the greatest regard, Sir, your most faithful, and most affectionate humble servant,

"THO. BIRCH."

Mr. Charles Burney, who has since distinguished himself so much in the science of Music, and obtained a Doctor's degree from the University of Oxford, had been driven from the capital by bad health, and was now residing at Lynn Regis in Norfolk. He had been so much delighted with Johnson's "Rambler," and the "Plan" of his Dictionary, that when the great work was announced in the newspapers as nearly finished, he wrote to Dr. Johnson, begging to be informed when and in what manner his Dictionary would be published ; entreating, if it should be by subscription, or he should have any books at his own disposal, to be favoured with six copies for himself and friends.

In answer to this application, Dr. Johnson wrote the following letter, of which (to use Dr. Burney's own words) "If it be remembered that it was written to an obscure young man, who at this time had not much distinguished himself even in his own profession, but whose name could never have reached the author of 'THE RAMBLER,' the politeness and urbanity may be opposed to some of the stories which have been lately circulated of Dr. Johnson's natural rudeness and ferocity."

"TO MR. BURNEY, IN LYNN REGIS, NORFOLK.

"SIR,

"IF you imagine that by delaying my answer I intended to shew any neglect of the notice with which you have favoured me, you will neither think justly of yourself nor of me. Your civilities were offered with too much elegance not to engage attention ; and I have too much pleasure in pleasing men like you, not to feel very sensibly the distinction which you have bestowed upon me.

"Few consequences of my endeavours to please or to benefit

mankind have delighted me more than your friendship thus voluntarily offered, which now I have it I hope to keep, because I hope to continue to deserve it.

"I have no Dictionaries to dispose of for myself, but shall be glad to have you direct your friends to Mr. Dodsley, because it was by his recommendation that I was employed in the work.

"When you have leisure to think again upon me let me be favoured with another letter; and another yet, when you have looked into my Dictionary. If you find faults, I shall endeavour to mend them; if you find none, I shall think you blinded by kind partiality: but to have made you partial in his favour, will very much gratify the ambition of, Sir, your most obliged and most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"Gough-square, Fleet-street,
"April 8, 1755."

Mr. Andrew Millar, bookseller in the Strand, took the principal charge of conducting the publication of Johnson's Dictionary; and as the patience of the proprietors was repeatedly tried and almost exhausted by their expecting that the work would be completed within the time which Johnson had sanguinely supposed, the learned author was often goaded to dispatch, more especially as he had received all the copy-money, by different drafts, a considerable time before he had finished his task. When the messenger who carried the last sheet to Millar returned, Johnson asked him, "Well, what did he say?"—"Sir," answered the messenger, "he said, 'Thank GOD I have done with him.'"—"I am glad," replied Johnson with a smile, "that he thanks GOD for any thing."[1] It is remarkable, that those with whom Johnson chiefly contracted for his literary labours were Scotchmen, Mr. Millar and Mr. Strahan. Millar, though himself no great judge of literature, had good sense enough to have for his friends very able men to give him their opinion

[1] Sir John Hawkins, p. 341, inserts two notes as having passed formally between Andrew Millar and Johnson, to the above effect. I am assured this was not the case. In the way of incidental remark it was a pleasant play of raillery. To have deliberately written notes in such terms would have been morose. B.

and advice in the purchase of copyright ; the consequence of which was his acquiring a very large fortune, with great liberality. Johnson said of him, "I respect Millar, Sir ; he has raised the price of literature." The same praise may be justly given to Panckoucke, the eminent bookseller of Paris.[1] Mr. Strahan's liberality, judgment, and success are well known.

"TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ. AT LANGTON NEAR SPILSBY, LINCOLNSHIRE.

"SIR,

"IT has been long observed, that men do not suspect faults which they do not commit : your own elegance of manners, and punctuality of complaisance, did not suffer you to impute to me that negligence of which I was guilty, and which I have not since atoned. I received both your letters, and received them with pleasure proportionate to the esteem which so short an acquaintance strongly impressed, and which I hope to confirm by nearer knowledge, though I am afraid that gratification will be for a time withheld.

"I have, indeed, published my Book [his Dictionary], of which I beg to know your father's judgment, and yours ; and I have now stayed long enough to watch its progress in the world. It has, you see, no patrons, and, I think, has yet had no opponents, except the critics of the coffee-house, whose outcries are soon dispersed into the air, and are thought on no more : from this, therefore, I am at liberty, and think of taking the opportunity of this interval to make an excursion, and why not then into Lincolnshire ? or, to mention a stronger attraction, why not to dear Mr. Langton ? I will give the true reason, which I know you will approve :—I have a mother more than eighty years old, who has counted the days to the publication of my book, in hopes of seeing me ; and to her, if I can disengage myself here, I resolve to go.

"As I know, dear Sir, that to delay my visit for a reason like this, will not deprive me of your esteem, I beg it may not lessen your kindness. I have very seldom received an offer of friendship which I so earnestly desire to cultivate and mature. I shall rejoice to hear from you, till I can see you, and will see you as soon as I can ; for when the duty that calls me to Lichfield is

[1] Charles Joseph Panckoucke (1736—98) published for Buffon, Rousseau, and Voltaire, and founded *Le Moniteur*, the first number of which appeared November 24, 1789.

discharged, my inclination will carry me to Langton. I shall delight to hear the ocean roar, or see the stars twinkle, in the company of men to whom Nature does not spread her volumes or utter her voice in vain.

"Do not, dear Sir, make the slowness of this letter a precedent for delay, or imagine that I approved the incivility that I have committed; for I have known you enough to love you, and sincerely to wish a farther knowledge; and I assure you, once more, that to live in a house that contains such a father, and such a son, will be accounted a very uncommon degree of pleasure, by, dear Sir, your most obliged, and most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"May 6, 1755."

"TO THE REVEREND MR. THOMAS WARTON.

"DEAR SIR,

"I AM grieved that you should think me capable of neglecting your letters; and beg you will never admit any such suspicion again. I purpose to come down next week, if you shall be there: or any other week, that shall be more agreeable to you. Therefore let me know. I can stay this visit but a week, but intend to make preparations for a longer stay next time; being resolved not to lose sight of the University. How goes Apollonius?[1] Don't let him be forgotten. Some things of this kind must be done, to keep us up. Pay my compliments to Mr. Wise, and all my other friends. I think to come to Kettel-Hall. I am, Sir, your most affectionate, &c.

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"[London,] May 13, 1755."

"TO THE SAME.

"DEAR SIR,

"IT is strange how many things will happen to intercept every pleasure, though it [be] only that of two friends meeting together. I have promised myself every day to inform you when you might expect me at Oxford, and have not been able to fix a time. The time, however, is, I think, at last come; and I promise myself to repose in Kettel-Hall, one of the first nights of the next week. I am afraid my stay with you cannot be long; but what is the inference? We must endeavour to make it

[1] A translation of Apollonius Rhodius was now intended by Mr. Warton. *Warton.* B.

cheerful. I wish your brother could meet us, that we might go and drink tea with Mr. Wise in a body. I hope he will be at Oxford, or at his nest of British and Saxon antiquities.[1] I shall expect to see Spenser finished, and many other things begun. Dodsley is gone to visit the Dutch. The Dictionary sells well.[2] The rest of the world goes on as it did. Dear Sir, your most affectionate, &c.

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"[London,] June 10, 1755."

"TO THE SAME.

"DEAR SIR,

"To talk of coming to you, and not yet come, has an air of trifling which I would not willingly have among you; and which, I believe, you will not willingly impute to me, when I have told you, that since my promise, two of our partners[3] are dead, and that I was solicited to suspend my excursion till we could recover from our confusion.

"I have not laid aside my purpose: for every day makes me more impatient of staying from you. But death, you know, hears not supplications, nor pays any regard to the convenience of mortals. I hope now to see you next week; but next week is but another name for to-morrow, which has been noted for promising and deceiving. I am, &c.

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"[London,] June 24, 1755."

"TO THE SAME.

"DEAR SIR,

"I TOLD you that among the manuscripts are some things of Sir Thomas More. I beg you to pass an hour in looking on them, and procure a transcript of the ten or twenty first lines of each, to be compared with what I have; that I may know whether they are yet published. The manuscripts are these:

"Catalogue of Bodl. MS. page 122. F. 3. Sir Thomas More.

"1. Fall of angels. 2. Creation and fall of mankind. 3. Determination of the Trinity for the rescue of mankind. 4. Five

[1] At Ellsfield, a village three miles from Oxford. *Warton.* B.

[2] It was published on April 15th, 1755, in two volumes folio, price £4 10*s.* *bound.* The last edition to receive Johnson's corrections was the fourth, published in 1773.

[3] Booksellers concerned in his Dictionary. *Warton.* B. Paul Knapton and Thomas Longman.

lectures of our Saviour's passion. 5. Of the institution of the sacrament, three lectures. 6. How to receive the blessed body of our Lord sacramentally. 7. Neomenia, the new moon. 8. *De tristitia, tædio, pavore, et oratione Christiante captionem ejus.*

"Catalogue, page 154. Life of Sir Thomas More. *Qu.* Whether Roper's? Page 363. *De resignatione Magni Sigilli in manus Regis per D. Thomam Morum.* Page 364. *Mori Defensio Moriæ.*

"If you procure the young gentleman in the library to write out what you think fit to be written, I will send to Mr. Prince the bookseller to pay him what you think proper.

"Be pleased to make my compliments to Mr. Wise, and all my friends. I am, Sir, your affectionate, &c.

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"[London,] Aug. 7, 1755."

The Dictionary, with a Grammar and History of the English Language, being now at length published, in two volumes folio, the world contemplated with wonder so stupendous a work achieved by one man, while other countries had thought such undertakings fit only for whole academies. Vast as his powers were, I cannot but think that his imagination deceived him, when he supposed that by constant application he might have performed the task in three years. Let the Preface be attentively perused, in which is given, in a clear, strong, and glowing style, a comprehensive, yet particular view of what he had done; and it will be evident, that the time he employed upon it was comparatively short. I am unwilling to swell my book with long quotations from what is in every body's hands, and I believe there are few prose compositions in the English language that are read with more delight, or are more impressed upon the memory, than that preliminary discourse. One of its excellences has always struck me with peculiar admiration; I mean the perspicuity with which he has expressed abstract scientific notions. As an instance of this, I shall quote the following sentence: "When the radical idea branches out into parallel ramifications, how can a consecutive series be formed of senses in their nature collateral?" We have here an example of what has been often said, and I believe

with justice, that there is for every thought a certain nice adaptation of words which none other could equal, and which when a man has been so fortunate as to hit, he has attained, in that particular case, the perfection of language.

The extensive reading which was absolutely necessary for the accumulation of authorities, and which alone may account for Johnson's retentive mind being enriched with a very large and various store of knowledge and imagery, must have occupied several years. The Preface furnishes an eminent instance of a double talent, of which Johnson was fully conscious. Sir Joshua Reynolds heard him say, "There are two things which I am confident I can do very well: one is an introduction to any literary work, stating what it is to contain, and how it should be executed in the most perfect manner; the other is a conclusion, shewing from various causes why the execution has not been equal to what the author promised to himself and to the public."

How should puny scribblers be abashed and disappointed, when they find him displaying a perfect theory of lexicographical excellence, yet at the same time candidly and modestly allowing that he "had not satisfied his own expectations." Here was a fair occasion for the exercise of Johnson's modesty, when he was called upon to compare his own arduous performance, not with those of other individuals (in which case his inflexible regard to truth would have been violated had he affected diffidence), but with speculative perfection; as he, who can outstrip all his competitors in the race, may yet be sensible of his deficiency when he runs against time. Well might he say, that "the English Dictionary was written with little assistance of the learned;" for he told me, that the only aid which he received was a paper containing twenty etymologies, sent to him by a person then unknown, who he was afterwards informed was Dr. Pearce, Bishop of Rochester. The etymologies, though they exhibit learning and judgment, are not, I think, entitled to the first praise amongst the various parts of this immense work. The definitions have always appeared to me such astonishing

proofs of acuteness of intellect and precision of language, as indicate a genius of the highest rank. This it is which marks the superior excellence of Johnson's Dictionary over others equally or even more voluminous, and must have made it a work of much greater mental labour than mere Lexicons, or *Word-Books*, as the Dutch call them. They who will make the experiment of trying how they can define a few words of whatever nature, will soon be satisfied of the unquestionable justice of this observation, which I can assure my readers is founded upon much study, and upon communication with more minds than my own.

A few of his definitions must be admitted to be erroneous. Thus, *Windward* and *Leeward*, though directly of opposite meaning, are defined identically the same way; as to which inconsiderable specks it is enough to observe, that his Preface announces that he was aware there might be many such in so immense a work; nor was he at all disconcerted when an instance was pointed out to him. A lady once asked him how he came to define *Pastern* the *knee* of a horse: instead of making an elaborate defence, as she expected, he at once answered, "Ignorance, Madam, pure ignorance." His definition of *Network* has often been quoted with sportive malignity, as obscuring a thing in itself very plain. But to these frivolous censures no other answer is necessary than that with which we are furnished by his own Preface.

"To explain, requires the use of terms less abstruse than that which is to be explained, and such terms cannot always be found. For as nothing can be proved but by supposing something intuitively known, and evident without proof, so nothing can be defined but by the use of words too plain to admit of a definition. Sometimes easier words are changed into harder; as, *burial*, into *sepulture* or *interment*; *drier*, into *desiccative*; *dryness*, into *siccity*, or *aridity*; *fit*, into *paroxysm*; for, the *easiest* word, whatever it be, can never be translated into one more easy."[1]

[1] In the Preface to his fourth edition he writes: "He that undertakes to compile a Dictionary, undertakes that which, if it comprehends the full extent of his design, he knows himself

His introducing his own opinions, and even prejudices, under general definitions of words, while at the same time the original meaning of the words is not explained, as his *Tory*, *Whig*, *Pension*, *Oats*, *Excise*,[1] and a few more, cannot be fully defended, and must be placed to the account of capricious and humourous indulgence. Talking to me upon this subject when we were at Ashbourne in 1777, he mentioned a still stronger instance of the predominance of his private feelings in the composition of this work, than any now to be found in it. "You know, Sir, Lord

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unable to perform." Both *windward* and *leeward* are defined as *towards the wind*, and this he never corrected; *pastern* however he set right in the fourth edition. *Networks* he defined as "Anything reticulated or decupated at equal distances, with interstices between the intersections."

[1] He thus defines Excise—"A hateful tax levied upon commodities, and adjudged not by the common judges of property, but wretches hired by those to whom Excise is paid." The Commissioners of Excise being offended by this severe reflection, consulted Mr. Murray, then Attorney-General, to know whether redress could be legally obtained. I wished to have procured for my readers a copy of the opinion which he gave, and which may now be justly considered as history: but the mysterious secrecy of office it seems would not permit it. I am, however, informed, by very good authority, that its import was, that the passage might be considered as actionable; but that it would be more prudent in the Board not to prosecute. Johnson never made the smallest alteration in this passage. We find he still retained his early prejudice against Excise; for in the *Idler*, No. 65, there is the following very extraordinary paragraph: "The authenticity of Clarendon's History, though printed with the sanction of one of the first Universities of the world, had not an unexpected manuscript been happily discovered, would, with the help of factious credulity, have been brought into question, by the two lowest of all human beings, a Scribbler for a party, and a Commissioner of Excise." The persons to whom he alludes were Mr. John Oldmixon and George Ducket, Esq. B. Croker obtained a copy of Murray's opinion, which was to the effect that he thought the definition a libel, but recommended that Johnson should be given an opportunity of altering it, and, if he would not, threatened with an information. Johnson altered the words in his abridged edition, but never in the others.

Gower forsook the old Jacobite interest. When I came to the word *Renegado*, after telling that it meant 'One who deserts to the enemy, a revolter,' I added, *Sometimes we say a* GOWER. Thus it went to the press: but the printer had more wit than I, and struck it out."

Let it, however, be remembered, that this indulgence does not display itself only in sarcasm towards others, but sometimes in playful allusion to the notions commonly entertained of his own laborious task. Thus: "*Grub-street*, the name of a street in London, much inhabited by writers of small histories, *dictionaries*, and temporary poems; whence any mean production is called *Grub-street*."—"*Lexicographer*, a writer of dictionaries, a *harmless drudge*."

At the time when he was concluding his very eloquent Preface, Johnson's mind appears to have been in such a state of depression, that we cannot contemplate without wonder the vigorous and splendid thoughts which so highly distinguish that performance. "I," says he, "may surely be contented without the praise of perfection, which if I could obtain in this gloom of solitude, what would it avail me? I have protracted my work till most of those whom I wished to please, have sunk into the grave; and success and miscarriage are empty sounds. I therefore dismiss it with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or hope from censure or from praise." That this indifference was rather a temporary than an habitual feeling, appears, I think, from his letters to Mr. Warton; and however he may have been affected for the moment, certain it is that the honours which his great work procured him, both at home and abroad, were very grateful to him. His friend the Earl of Cork and Orrery, being at Florence, presented it to the *Academia della Crusca*. That Academy sent Johnson their *Vocabulario*, and the French Academy sent him their *Dictionnaire*, which Mr. Langton had the pleasure to convey to him.

It must undoubtedly seem strange, that the conclusion of his Preface should be expressed in terms so desponding, when it is considered that the author was then only in his

forty-sixth year. But we must ascribe its gloom to that miserable dejection of spirits to which he was constitutionally subject, and which was aggravated by the death of his wife two years before. I have heard it ingeniously observed by a lady of rank and elegance, that "his melancholy was then at its meridian." It pleased God to grant him almost thirty years of life after this time; and once when he was in a placid frame of mind, he was obliged to own to me that he had enjoyed happier days, and had many more friends, since that gloomy hour than before.

It is a sad saying, that "most of those whom he wished to please had sunk into the grave;" and his case at forty-five was singularly unhappy, unless the circle of his friends was very narrow. I have often thought, that as longevity is generally desired, and, I believe, generally expected, it would be wise to be continually adding to the number of our friends, that the loss of some may be supplied by others. Friendship, "the wine of life," should, like a well-stocked cellar, be thus continually renewed; and it is consolatory to think, that although we can seldom add what will equal the generous *first-growths* of our youth, yet friendship becomes insensibly old in much less time than is commonly imagined, and not many years are required to make it very mellow and pleasant. *Warmth* will, no doubt, make a considerable difference. Men of affectionate temper and bright fancy will coalesce a great deal sooner than those who are cold and dull.

The proposition which I have now endeavoured to illustrate was, at a subsequent period of his life, the opinion of Johnson himself. He said to Sir Joshua Reynolds, "If a man does not make new acquaintance as he advances through life, he will soon find himself left alone. A man, Sir, should keep his friendship *in constant repair.*"

The celebrated Mr. Wilkes, whose notions and habits of life were very opposite to his, but who was ever eminent for literature and vivacity, sallied forth with a little *Jeu d'Esprit* upon the following passage in his

Grammar of the English Tongue, prefixed to the Dictionary : "*H.* seldom, perhaps never, begins any but the first syllable." In an essay printed in "The Public Advertiser," this lively writer enumerated many instances in opposition to this remark ; for example : "The author of this observation must be a man of quick *appre-hension*, and of a most *compre-hensive* genius." The position is undoubtedly expressed with too much latitude.

This light sally, we may suppose, made no great impression on our Lexicographer ; for we find that he did not alter the passage till many years afterwards.[1]

He had the pleasure of being treated in a very different manner by his old pupil Mr. Garrick, in the following complimentary Epigram :

"*On* JOHNSON'S DICTIONARY.

"TALK of war with a Briton, he'll boldly advance,
That one English soldier will beat ten of France ;
Would we alter the boast from the sword to the pen,
Our odds are still greater, still greater our men.
In the deep mines of science though Frenchmen may toil,
Can their strength be compar'd to Locke, Newton, and Boyle ?
Let them rally their heroes, send forth all their pow'rs,
Their verse-men and prose-men, then match them with ours !
First Shakespeare and Milton, like gods in the fight,
Have put their whole drama and epic to flight ;
In satires, epistles, and odes, would they cope,
Their numbers retreat before Dryden and Pope :
And Johnson, well arm'd, like a hero of yore,
Has beat forty French,[2] and will beat forty more !"

Johnson this year gave at once a proof of his benevolence, quickness of apprehension, and admirable art of composition, in the assistance which he gave to Mr. Zachariah Williams, father of the blind lady whom he

[1] In the third edition, published in 1773, he left out the words *perhaps never*, and added the following paragraph : "It sometimes begins middle or final syllables in words compounded, as *block-head*, or derived from the Latin, as *compre-hended*." B.

[2] The number of the French Academy employed in settling their language. B.

had humanely received under his roof. Mr. Williams had followed the profession of physic in Wales; but having a very strong propensity to the study of natural philosophy, had made many ingenious advanҫes towards a discovery of the longitude, and repaired to London in hopes of obtaining the great parliamentary reward. He failed of success; but Johnson having made himself master of his principles and experiments, wrote for him a pamphlet, published in quarto, with the following title: "An Account of an Attempt to ascertain the Longitude at Sea, by an exact Theory of the Variation of the Magnetical Needle; with a Table of the Variations at the most remarkable Cities in Europe, from the year 1660 to 1680." To diffuse it more extensively, it was accompanied with an Italian translation on the opposite page, which it is supposed was the work of Signor Baretti,[1] an Italian of considerable literature, who having come to England a few years before, had been employed in the capacity both of a language-master and an author, and formed an intimacy with Dr. Johnson. This pamphlet Johnson presented to the Bodleian Library. On a blank leaf of it is pasted a paragraph cut out of a newspaper, containing an account of the death and character of Williams, plainly written by Johnson.[2]

[1] Joseph Baretti (1716-89) was born at Turin, and established himself in London as a teacher of Italian in 1751. He published among other works an Italian and English Dictionary which has gone through many editions. He was tried for murder arising out of a brawl in the Haymarket, defended himself and was acquitted, Johnson, Burke, and Garrick all appearing as witnesses to his character.

[2] "On Saturday the 12th, about twelve at night, died Mr. Zachariah Williams, in his eighty-third year, after an illness of eight months, in full possession of his mental faculties. He has been long known to philosophers and seamen for his skill in magnetism, and his proposal to ascertain the longitude by a peculiar system of the variation of the compass. He was a man of industry indefatigable, of conversation inoffensive, patient of adversity and disease, eminently sober, temperate, and pious; and worthy to have ended life with better fortune." B.

In July this year he had formed some scheme of mental improvement, the particular purpose of which does not appear. But we find in his "Prayers and Meditations," p. 25, a prayer entitled, "On the Study of Philosophy, as an instrument of living;" and after it follows a note, "This study was not pursued."

On the 13th of the same month he wrote in his Journal the following scheme of life, for Sunday: "Having lived" (as he with tenderness of conscience expresses himself) "not without an habitual reverence for the Sabbath, yet without that attention to its religious duties which Christianity requires:

"1. To rise early, and in order to it, to go to sleep early on Saturday.

"2. To use some extraordinary devotion in the morning.

"3. To examine the tenor of my life, and particularly the last week; and to mark my advances in religion, or recession from it.

"4. To read the Scripture methodically with such helps as are at hand.

"5. To go to church twice.

"6. To read books of Divinity, either speculative or practical.

"7. To instruct my family.

"8. To wear off by meditation any worldly soil contracted in the week."

In 1756 Johnson found that the great fame of his Dictionary had not set him above the necessity of "making provision for the day that was passing over him." No royal or noble patron extended a munificent hand to give independence to the man who had conferred stability on the language of his country. We may feel indignant that there should have been such unworthy neglect; but we must, at the same time, congratulate ourselves, when we consider, that to this very neglect, operating to rouse the natural indolence of his constitution, we owe many valuable productions, which otherwise, perhaps, might never have appeared.

He had spent, during the progress of the work, the money for which he had contracted to write his Dictionary. We have seen that the reward of his labour was

only fifteen hundred and seventy-five pounds; and when the expense of amanuenses and paper, and other articles, are deducted, his clear profit was very inconsiderable. I once said to him, "I am sorry, Sir, you did not get more for your Dictionary." His answer was, "I am sorry too. But it was very well. The booksellers are generous, liberal-minded men." He, upon all occasions, did ample justice to their character in this respect. He considered them as the patrons of literature; and, indeed, although they have eventually been considerable gainers by his Dictionary, it is to them that we owe its having been undertaken and carried through at risk of great expense, for they were not absolutely sure of being indemnified.

On the first day of this year we find from his private devotions, that he had then recovered from sickness (*Prayers and Meditations*), and in February that his eye was restored to its use (*Ibid.* p. 27). The pious gratitude with which he acknowledges mercies upon every occasion is very edifying; as is the humble submission which he breathes, when it is the will of his heavenly Father to try him with afflictions. As such dispositions become the state of man here, and are the true effects of religious discipline, we cannot but venerate in Johnson one of the most exercised minds that our holy religion hath ever formed. If there be any thoughtless enough to suppose such exercise the weakness of a great understanding, let them look up to Johnson, and be convinced that what he so earnestly practised must have a rational foundation.

His works this year were, an abstract or epitome, in octavo, of his folio Dictionary, and a few essays in a monthly publication, entitled, "The Universal Visiter." Christopher Smart, with whose unhappy vacillation of mind he sincerely sympathised, was one of the stated undertakers of this miscellany; and it was to assist him that Johnson sometimes employed his pen.[1] All the

[1] Christopher Smart (1722–71) was educated at Cambridge. He published a translation of Horace, a metrical version of the Psalms, and other poems. Latterly he grew mad, partly through his distresses, partly through intemperance, and died in an asylum.

essays marked with two *asterisks* have been ascribed to him; but I am confident, from internal evidence, that of these, neither "The Life of Chaucer," "Reflections on the State of Portugal," nor an "Essay on Architecture," were written by him. I am equally confident, upon the same evidence, that he wrote "Farther Thoughts on Agriculture;" † being the sequel of a very inferior essay on the same subject, and which, though carried on as if by the same hand, is both in thinking and expression so far above it, and so strikingly peculiar, as to leave no doubt of its true parent; and that he also wrote "A Dissertation on the State of Literature and Authors," † and "A Dissertation on the Epitaphs written by Pope." * The last of these, indeed, he afterwards added to his "Idler." Why the essays truly written by him are marked in the same manner with some which he did not write, I cannot explain; but with deference to those who have ascribed to him the three essays which I have rejected, they want all the characteristical marks of Johnsonian composition.

He engaged also to superintend and contribute largely to another monthly publication, entitled "THE LITERARY MAGAZINE, OR UNIVERSAL REVIEW;" * the first number of which came out in May this year. What were his emoluments from this undertaking, and what other writers were employed in it, I have not discovered. He continued to write in it, with intermissions, till the fifteenth number; and I think that he never gave better proofs of the force, acuteness, and vivacity of his mind, than in this miscellany, whether we consider his original essays, or his reviews of the works of others. The "Preliminary Address" † to the public, is a proof how this great man could embellish, with the graces of superior composition, even so trite a thing as the plan of a magazine.

His original essays are, "An Introduction to the Political State of Great Britain;" † "Remarks on the Militia Bill;" † "Observations on his Britannic Majesty's Treaties with the Empress of Russia and the Landgrave of Hesse Cassel;" † "Observations on the Present State

of Affairs;"† and, "Memoirs of Frederick III. King of Prussia." In all these he displays extensive political knowledge and sagacity, expressed with uncommon energy and perspicuity, without any of those words which he sometimes took a pleasure in adopting, in imitation of Sir Thomas Browne; of whose "Christian Morals" he this year gave an edition, with his "Life" * prefixed to it, which is one of Johnson's best biographical performances. In one instance only in these essays has he indulged his *Brownism*. Dr. Robertson, the historian, mentioned it to me, as having at once convinced him that Johnson was the author of the "Memoirs of the King of Prussia." Speaking of the pride which the old King, the father of his hero, took in being master of the tallest regiment in Europe, he says, "To review this *towering* regiment was his daily pleasure; and to perpetuate it was so much his care, that when he met a tall woman he immediately commanded one of his *Titanian* retinue to marry her, that they might *propagate procerity*." For this Anglo-Latian word *procerity*, Johnson had, however, the authority of Addison.

His reviews are of the following books: Birch's "History of the Royal Society;"† Murphy's "Gray's-Inn Journal;"† Warton's "Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope, Vol. I.;" Hampton's "Translation of Polybius;"† Blackwell's "Memoirs of the Court of Augustus;"† Russel's "Natural History of Aleppo;"† Sir Isaac Newton's "Arguments in Proof of a Deity;"† Borlase's "History of the Isles of Scilly;"† Holme's "Experiments on Bleaching;"† Browne's "Christian Morals;"† Hales "On Distilling Sea-Water, Ventilators in Ships, and Curing an Ill Taste in Milk;"† Lucas's "Essay on Waters;"† Keith's "Catalogue of the Scottish Bishops;"† Browne's "History of Jamaica;"† "Philosophical Transactions, Vol. XLIX.;"† Mrs. Lenox's "Translation of Sully's Memoirs;"* "Miscellanies" by Elizabeth Harrison;† Evans's "Map and Account of the Middle Colonies in America;"† "Letter on the Case of Admiral Byng;"* "Appeal to the People concerning

Admiral Byng ;" * Hanway's "Eight Days' Journey, and Essay on Tea ;" * "The Cadet, a Military Treatise ;" † "Some Farther Particulars in Relation to the Case of Admiral Byng," by a Gentleman of Oxford ;* "The Conduct of the Ministry relating to the present War impartially examined ;" † "A Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil." * All these, from internal evidence, were written by Johnson : some of them I know he avowed, and have marked them with an *asterisk* accordingly. Mr. Thomas Davies indeed, ascribed to him the Review of Mr. Burke's "Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful ;" and Sir John Hawkins, with equal discernment, has inserted it in his collection of Johnson's works : whereas it has no resemblance to Johnson's composition, and is well known to have been written by Mr. Murphy, who has acknowledged it to me and many others.

It is worthy of remark, in justice to Johnson's political character, which has been misrepresented as abjectly submissive to power, that his "Observations on the Present State of Affairs," glow with as animated a spirit of constitutional liberty as can be found any where. Thus he begins :

"The time is now come, in which every Englishman expects to be informed of the national affairs ; and in which he has a right to have that expectation gratified. For, whatever may be urged by ministers, or those whom vanity or interest make the followers of ministers, concerning the necessity of confidence in our governors, and the presumption of prying with profane eyes into the recesses of policy, it is evident that this reverence can be claimed only by counsels yet unexecuted, and projects suspended in deliberation. But when a design has ended in miscarriage or success, when every eye and every ear is witness to general discontent, or general satisfaction, it is then a proper time to disentangle confusion and illustrate obscurity ; to shew by what causes every event was produced, and in what effects it is likely to terminate; to lay down with distinct particularity what rumour always huddles in general exclamation, or perplexes by undigested narratives; to shew whence happiness or calamity is derived, and whence it may be expected ; and honestly to lay before the people what inquiry can gather of the past, and conjecture can estimate of the future."

Here we have it assumed as an incontrovertible principle, that in this country the people are the superintendents of the conduct and measures of those by whom government is administered; of the beneficial effect of which the present reign afforded an illustrious example, when addresses from all parts of the kingdom controlled an audacious attempt to introduce a new power subversive of the crown.[1]

A still stronger proof of his patriotic spirit appears in his review of an "Essay on Waters," by Dr. Lucas, of whom, after describing him as a man well known to the world for his daring defiance of power, when he thought it exerted on the side of wrong, he thus speaks:

"The Irish ministers drove him from his native country by a proclamation, in which they charge him with crimes of which they never intended to be called to the proof, and oppressed him by methods equally irresistible by guilt and innocence.

"Let the man thus driven into exile, for having been the friend of his country, be received in every other place as a confessor of liberty; and let the tools of power be taught in time, that they may rob, but cannot impoverish."[2]

Some of his reviews in this Magazine are very short accounts of the pieces noticed, and I mention them only that Dr. Johnson's opinion of the works may be known; but many of them are examples of elaborate criticism, in the most masterly style. In his review of the "Memoirs of the Court of Augustus," he has the resolution to think and speak from his own mind, regardless of the cant transmitted from age to age, in praise of the ancient Romans. Thus: "I know not why any one but a schoolboy in his

[1] An allusion to Fox's India Bill, which proposed to transfer the authority of the Company to seven Commissioners to be named by Parliament and not removable at the pleasure of the Crown. The Bill passed the Commons, but was thrown out by the Lords, and the Coalition Ministry with it, in 1783.

[2] Among other grievances in Irish government Dr. Lucas, a Dublin physician, attacked the duration of Parliament, which was practically unlimited. In 1749 he was prosecuted on a charge of sedition, but escaped to England, where he practised his profession unmolested till 1761. He then returned to Dublin and was elected one of its members. He died in 1771.

declamation should whine over the Commonwealth of Rome, which grew great only by the misery of the rest of mankind. The Romans, like others, as soon as they grew rich, grew corrupt; and in their corruption sold the lives and freedoms of themselves, and of one another." Again, "A people, who while they were poor robbed mankind; and as soon as they became rich, robbed one another." In his review of the "Miscellanies" in prose and verse, published by Elizabeth Harrison, but written by many hands, he gives an eminent proof at once of his orthodoxy and candour.

"The authors of the essays in prose seem generally to have imitated, or tried to imitate, the copiousness and luxuriance of Mrs. Rowe. This, however, is not all their praise; they have laboured to add to her brightness of imagery, her purity of sentiments. The poets have had Dr. Watts before their eyes; a writer, who, if he stood not in the first class of genius, compensated that defect by a ready application of his powers to the promotion of piety. The attempt to employ the ornaments of romance in the decoration of religion, was, I think, first made by Mr. Boyle's *Martyrdom of Theodora*; but Boyle's philosophical studies did not allow him time for the cultivation of style: and the completion of the great design was reserved for Mrs. Rowe. Dr. Watts was one of the first who taught the Dissenters to write and speak like other men, by shewing them that elegance might consist with piety. They would have both done honour to a better society, for they had that charity which might well make their failings be forgotten, and with which the whole Christian world wish for communion. They were pure from all the heresies of an age, to which every opinion is become a favourite that the universal church has hitherto detested!

"This praise the general interest of mankind requires to be given to writers who please and do not corrupt, who instruct and do not weary. But to them all human eulogies are vain, whom I believe applauded by angels, and numbered with the just."

His defence of tea against Mr. Jonas Hanway's violent attack upon that elegant and popular beverage, shews how very well a man of genius can write upon the slightest subject, when he writes as the Italians say, *con amore:* I suppose no person ever enjoyed with more relish the infusion of that fragrant leaf than Johnson. The quantities which he drank of it at all hours were so great, that

his nerves must have been uncommonly strong, not to have been extremely relaxed by such an intemperate use of it.[1] He assured me, that he never felt the least inconvenience from it; which is a proof that the fault of his constitution was rather a too great tension of fibres, than the contrary. Mr. Hanway wrote an angry answer to Johnson's review of his "Essay on Tea," and Johnson, after a full and deliberate pause, made a reply to it; the only instance, I believe, in the whole course of his life, when he condescended to oppose any thing that was written against him. I suppose when he thought of any of his little antagonists, he was ever justly aware of the high sentiment of Ajax in Ovid:

> "Iste tulit pretium jam nunc certaminis hujus,
> Qui, cum victus erit, mecum certasse feretur."
> *Met.* xiii. 10.

But, indeed, the good Mr. Hanway laid himself so open to ridicule, that Johnson's animadversions upon his attack were chiefly to make sport.

The generosity with which he pleads the cause of Admiral Byng is highly to the honour of his heart and spirit. Though Voltaire affects to be witty upon the fate of that unfortunate officer, observing that he was shot "*pour encourager les autres*," the nation has long been satisfied that his life was sacrificed to the political fervour of the times. In the vault belonging to the Torrington family, in the church of Southill, in Bedfordshire, there is the following Epitaph upon his monument, which I have transcribed:

[1] In this review Johnson describes himself as "A hardened and shameless tea-drinker, who has for many years diluted his meals with only the infusion of this fascinating plant; whose kettle has scarcely time to cool; who with tea amuses the evening, with tea solaces the midnight, and with tea welcomes the morning." "This last phrase," says Croker, "his friend Tom Tyers happily parodied, '*tea* veniente die, *tea* decedente.'" It is extremely probable that, despite Boswell's assurances, Johnson's constitutional morbidity was greatly increased by his intemperate use of the tea pot.

"To the perpetual Disgrace
of public Justice,
The Honourable John Byng, Esq.
Admiral of the Blue,
Fell a Martyr to political
Persecution,
March 14, in the Year 1757;
when Bravery and Loyalty
were insufficient Securities
for the Life and Honour of
A Naval Officer."

Johnson's most exquisite critical essay in the "Literary Magazine," and indeed anywhere, is his review of Soame Jenyns's "Inquiry into the Origin of Evil." Jenyns was possessed of lively talents, and a style eminently pure and easy, and could very happily play with a light subject, either in prose or verse; but when he speculated on that most difficult and excruciating question, the Origin of Evil, he "ventured far beyond his depth," and, accordingly, was exposed by Johnson both with acute argument and brilliant wit. I remember when the late Mr. Bicknell's humorous performance, entitled "The Musical Travels of Joel Collyer," in which a slight attempt is made to ridicule Johnson was ascribed to Soame Jenyns, "Ha!" said Johnson, "I thought I had given *him* enough of it."

His triumph over Jenyns is thus described by my friend Mr. Courtenay in his "Poetical Review of the Literary and Moral Character of Dr. Johnson:" a performance of such merit, that had I not been honoured with a very kind and partial notice in it, I should echo the sentiments of men of the first taste loudly in its praise:

"When specious sophists with presumption scan
The source of evil hidden still from man;
Revive Arabian tales, and vainly hope
To rival St. John, and his scholar Pope:
Though metaphysics spread the gloom of night,
By reason's star he guides our aching sight;

The bounds of knowledge marks, and points the way
To pathless wastes, where wilder'd sages stray ;
Where, like a farthing link-boy, Jenyns stands,
And the dim torch drops from his feeble hands."[1]

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[1] Some time after Dr. Johnson's death there appeared in the newspapers and magazines an illiberal and petulant attack upon him, in the form of an Epitaph, under the name of Mr. Soame Jenyns, very unworthy of that gentleman, who had quietly submitted to the critical lash while Johnson lived. It assumed, as characteristics of him, all the vulgar circumstances of abuse which had circulated amongst the ignorant. It was an unbecoming indulgence of puny resentment, at a time when he himself was at a very advanced age, and had a near prospect of descending to the grave. I was truly sorry for it ; for he was then become an avowed, and (as my Lord Bishop of London, who had a serious conversation with him on the subject, assures me) a sincere Christian. He could not expect that Johnson's numerous friends would patiently bear to have the memory of their master stigmatized by no mean pen, but that, at least, one would be found to retort. Accordingly, this unjust and sarcastic Epitaph was met in the same public field by an answer, in terms by no means soft, and such as wanton provocation only could justify :

"EPITAPH,

"*Prepared for a creature* not quite dead *yet.*

"HERE lies a little ugly nauseous elf,
Who judging only from its wretched self,
Feebly attempted, petulant and vain,
The 'Origin of Evil,' to explain.
A mighty Genius at this elf displeas'd,
With a strong critic grasp the urchin squeez'd.
For thirty years its coward spleen it kept,
Till in the dust the mighty Genius slept ;
Then stunk and fretted in expiring snuff,
And blink'd at JOHNSON with its last poor puff." B.

The epitaph is evidently Boswell's own ; nobody else living would have printed any thing so stupid. Jenyns's is brutal enough, but is certainly not stupid :

"Here lies poor Johnson. Reader, have a care,
Tread lightly, lest you rouse a sleeping bear ;
Religious, moral, generous, and humane
He was—but self-sufficient, rude, and vain ;

This year Mr. William Payne, brother of the respectable bookseller of that name, published "An Introduction to the Game of Draughts," to which Johnson contributed a Dedication to the Earl of Rochford,* and a Preface,* both of which are admirably adapted to the treatise to which they are prefixed. Johnson, I believe, did not play at draughts after leaving College, by which he suffered; for it would have afforded him an innocent soothing relief from the melancholy which distressed him so often. I have heard him regret that he had not learnt to play at cards; and the game of draughts we know is peculiarly calculated to fix the attention without straining it. There is a composure and gravity in draughts which insensibly tranquillizes the mind; and, accordingly, the Dutch are fond of it, as they are of smoking, of the sedative influence of which, though he himself never smoked, he had a high opinion.[1] Besides, there is in draughts some exercise of the faculties; and, accordingly, Johnson wishing to dignify the subject in his Dedication with what is most estimable in it, observes:

"Triflers may find or make any thing a trifle: but since it is the great characteristic of a wise man to see events in their causes, to obviate consequences, and ascertain contingencies, your Lordship will think nothing a trifle by which the mind is inured to caution, foresight, and circumspection."

As one of the little occasional advantages which he did not disdain to take by his pen, as a man whose profession was literature, he this year accepted of a guinea from Mr. Robert Dodsley, for writing the introduction to "The London Chronicle," an evening newspaper; and even in

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Ill-bred and over-bearing in dispute,
A scholar and a Christian—yet a brute.
Would you know all his wisdom and his folly,
His actions, sayings, mirth, and melancholy,
Boswell and Thrale, retailers of his wit,
Will tell you how he wrote, and talk'd, and cough'd and spit."

[1] *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, 3rd edit. p. 48. B.

so slight a performance exhibited peculiar talents. This "Chronicle" still subsists, and from what I observed, when I was abroad, has a more extensive circulation upon the Continent than any of the English newspapers. It was constantly read by Johnson himself; and it is but just to observe, that it has all along been distinguished for good sense, accuracy, moderation, and delicacy.

Another instance of the same nature has been communicated to me by the Reverend Dr. Thomas Campbell, who has done himself considerable credit by his own writings.

"Sitting with Dr. Johnson one morning alone, he asked me if I had known Dr. Madden, who was the author of the premium-scheme[1] in Ireland. On my answering in the affirmative, and also that I had for some years lived in his neighbourhood, &c., he begged of me that when I returned to Ireland, I would endeavour to procure for him a poem of Dr. Madden's, called 'Boulter's Monument.'[2] The reason (said he) why I wish for it, is this: when Dr. Madden came to London, he submitted that work to my castigation; and I remember I blotted a great many lines, and might have blotted many more without making the poem

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[1] In the College of Dublin, four quarterly examinations of the students are held in each year, in various prescribed branches of literature and science; and premiums, consisting of books impressed with the College Arms, are adjudged by examiners to those who have most distinguished themselves in the several classes, after a very rigid trial, which lasts two days. This regulation, which has subsisted about seventy years, has been attended with the most beneficial effects. Dr. Samuel Madden was the first proposer of premiums in that University. They were instituted about the year 1734. He was also one of the founders of the DUBLIN SOCIETY for the encouragement of arts and agriculture. In addition to the premiums which were and are still annually given by that society for this purpose, Dr. Madden gave others from his own fund. Hence he was usually called "Premium Madden." *Malone.*

[2] Dr. Hugh Boulter, Archbishop of Armagh, and Primate of all Ireland. He died Sept. 27, 1742, at which time he was, for the thirteenth time, one of the Lords Justices of that kingdom. Johnson speaks of him in high terms of commendation, in his Life of Ambrose Philips. (*Lives of the Poets.*)

worse. However, the Doctor was very thankful, and very generous, for he gave me ten guineas, *which was to me at that time a great sum.*"

He this year resumed his scheme of giving an edition of "Shakespeare" with notes. He issued Proposals[1] of considerable length, in which he shewed that he perfectly well knew what a variety of research such an undertaking required; but his indolence prevented him from pursuing it with that diligence which alone can collect those scattered facts, that genius, however acute, penetrating, and luminous, cannot discover by its own force. It is remarkable, that at this time his fancied activity was for the moment so vigorous, that he promised his work should be published before Christmas, 1757. Yet nine years elapsed before it saw the light. His throes in bringing it forth had been severe and remittent; and at last we may almost conclude that the Cæsarian operation was performed by the knife of Churchill, whose upbraiding satire, I dare say, made Johnson's friends urge him to dispatch.

> "He for subscribers baits his hook,
> And takes their cash; but where's the book?
> No matter where; wise fear, we know,
> Forbids the robbing of a foe;
> But what, to serve our private ends,
> Forbids the cheating of our friends?" (*The Ghost*, iii. 801).

About this period he was offered a living of considerable value in Lincolnshire, if he were inclined to enter into holy orders. It was a rectory in the gift of Mr. Langton, the father of his much valued friend. But he did not accept of it; partly I believe from a conscientious motive, being persuaded that his temper and habits rendered him unfit for that assiduous and familiar instruction of the vulgar and ignorant, which he held to be an essential duty in a clergyman; and partly because his love of a London life was so strong, that he would have thought himself an

[1] They have been reprinted by Mr. Malone in the Preface to his edition of *Shakespeare*. B.

exile in any other place, particularly if residing in the country. Whoever would wish to see his thoughts upon that subject displayed in their full force, may peruse the "Adventurer," Number 126.

In 1757 it does not appear that he published any thing, except some of those articles in the "Literary Magazine," which have been mentioned. That magazine, after Johnson ceased to write in it, gradually declined, though the popular epithet of *Antigallican* was added to it; and in July 1758 it expired. He probably prepared a part of his Shakespeare this year, and he dictated a speech on the subject of an address to the Throne, after the expedition to Rochfort, which was delivered by one of his friends, I know not in what public meeting. It is printed in the "Gentleman's Magazine" for October 1785 as his, and bears sufficient marks of authenticity.

By the favour of Mr. Joseph Cooper Walker, of the Treasury, Dublin, I have obtained a copy of the following letter from Johnson to the venerable author of "Dissertations on the History of Ireland."

"TO CHARLES O'CONNOR, ESQ.

"SIR,

"I HAVE lately, by the favour of Mr. Faulkner, seen your account of Ireland, and cannot forbear to solicit a prosecution of your design. Sir William Temple complains that Ireland is less known than any other country, as to its ancient state. The natives have had little leisure, and little encouragement for inquiry; and strangers, not knowing the language, have had no ability.

"I have long wished that the Irish literature were cultivated.[1]

[1] The celebrated orator, Mr. Flood, has shown himself to be of Dr. Johnson's opinion: having by his will bequeathed his estate, after the death of his wife Lady Frances, to the University of Dublin; "Desiring that immediately after the said estate shall come into their possession, they shall appoint two professors, one for the study of the native Erse or Irish language, and the other for the study of Irish antiquities and Irish history, and for the study of any other European language illustrative of, or auxiliary to, the study of Irish antiquities or Irish history; and that they shall give yearly two liberal premiums for two compositions, one in verse, and the other in prose, in the Irish language." B. The will,

Ireland is known by tradition to have been once the seat of piety and learning; and surely it would be very acceptable to all those who are curious either in the original of nations, or the affinities of languages, to be farther informed of the revolution of a people so ancient, and once so illustrious.

"What relation there is between the Welsh and Irish language, or between the language of Ireland and that of Biscay, deserves inquiry. Of these provincial and unextended tongues, it seldom happens that more than one are understood by any one man; and, therefore, it seldoms happens that a fair comparison can be made. I hope you will continue to cultivate this kind of learning, which has too long lain neglected, and which, if it be suffered to remain in oblivion for another century, may, perhaps, never be retrieved. As I wish well to all useful undertakings, I would not forbear to let you know how much you deserve in my opinion, from all the lovers of study, and how much pleasure your work has given to, Sir, your most obliged, and most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"London, April 9, 1757."

"TO THE REVEREND MR. THOMAS WARTON.

"DEAR SIR,

"DR. MARSILI of Padua, a learned gentleman, and good Latin poet, has a mind to see Oxford. I have given him a letter to Dr. Huddesford,[1] and shall be glad if you will introduce him, and show him any thing in Oxford.

"I am printing my new edition of "Shakespeare."

"I long to see you all, but cannot conveniently come yet. You might write to me now and then, if you were good for any thing. But[2] *honores mutant mores*. Professors forget their friends. I shall certainly complain to Miss Jones.[3] I am, yours, &c.

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"[London,] June 21, 1757.

"Please to make my compliments to Mr. Wise."

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says Malone, was subsequently set aside by the Court of Exchequer in Ireland.

[1] Now, or late, Vice-Chancellor. *Warton.* B.

[2] Mr. Warton was elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford in the preceding year. *Warton.* B.

[3] "Miss Jones lives at Oxford, and was often of our parties. She was a very ingenious poetess, and published a volume of poems; and, on the whole, was a most sensible, agreeable, and amiable woman. She was sister to the Reverend River Jones, Chanter of

Mr. Burney having enclosed to him an extract from the review of his Dictionary in the *Bibliotheque des Savans* (vol. iii. 402), and a list of subscribers to his "Shakespeare," which Mr. Burney had procured in Norfolk, he wrote the following answer:

"TO MR. BURNEY, IN LYNN, NORFOLK.

"SIR,

"THAT I may shew myself sensible of your favours, and not commit the same fault a second time, I make haste to answer the letter which I received this morning. The truth is, the other likewise was received, and I wrote an answer; but being desirous to transmit you some proposals and receipts, I waited till I could find a convenient conveyance, and day was passed after day, till other things drove it from my thoughts; yet not so, but that I remember with great pleasure your commendation of my Dictionary. Your praise was welcome, not only because I believe it was sincere, but because praise has been very scarce. A man of your candour will be surprised when I tell you, that among all my acquaintance there were only two, who upon the publication of my book did not endeavour to depress me with threats of censure from the public, or with objections learned from those who had learned them from my own preface. Yours is the only letter of good-will that I have received; though, indeed, I am promised something of that sort from Sweden.

"How my new edition [of *Shakespeare*] will be received I know not; the subscription has not been very successful. I shall publish about March.

"If you can direct me how to send proposals, I should wish that they were in such hands.

"I remember, Sir, in some of the first letters with which you favoured me, you mentioned your lady. May I inquire after her?

Christ Church cathedral at Oxford, and Johnson used to call her the *Chantress*. I have heard him often address her in this passage from '*Il Penseroso*:'

'Thee, Chantress, oft the woods among,
I woo,' &c.

She died unmarried." *Warton*. B. She is quoted by Leigh Hunt in his *Essays on British Poetesses*, as author of a couplet which almost matches Pope's own dexterity of compliment:

"Alas! to live unknown, unenvied too;
'Tis more than Pope with all his wit can do."

In return for the favours which you have shewn me, it is not much to tell you, that I wish you and her all that can conduce to your happiness. I am, Sir, your most obliged, and most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"Gough-square, Dec. 24, 1757."

In 1758 we find him, it should seem, in as easy and pleasant a state of existence as constitutional unhappiness ever permitted him to enjoy.

"TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ. OF TRINITY COLLEGE, OXFORD.

"DEAR SIR,

"THOUGH I might have expected to hear from you, upon your entrance into a new state of life at a new place, yet recollecting, (not without some degree of shame,) that I owe you a letter upon an old account, I think it my part to write first. This, indeed, I do not only from complaisance but from interest; for living on in the old way, I am very glad of a correspondent so capable as yourself, to diversify the hours. You have, at present, too many novelties about you to need any help from me to drive along your time.

"I know not any thing more pleasant, or more instructive, than to compare experience with expectation, or to register from time to time the difference between idea and reality. It is by this kind of observation that we grow daily less liable to be disappointed. You, who are very capable of anticipating futurity, and raising phantoms before your own eyes, must often have imagined to yourself an academical life, and have conceived what would be the manners, the views, and the conversation, of men devoted to letters; how they would choose their companions, how they would direct their studies, and how they would regulate their lives. Let me know what you expected, and what you have found. At least record it to yourself before custom has reconciled you to the scenes before you, and the disparity of your discoveries to your hopes has vanished from your mind. It is a rule never to be forgotten, that whatever strikes strongly, should be described while the first impression remains fresh upon the mind.

"I love, dear Sir, to think on you, and therefore, should willingly write more to you, but that the post will not now give me leave to do more than send my compliments to Mr. Warton, and tell you that I am, dear Sir, most affectionately, your very humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"[January] 28, 1758."

"TO MR. BURNEY, AT LYNN, NORFOLK.

"SIR,

"YOUR kindness is so great, and my claim to any particular regard from you so little, that I am at a loss how to express my sense of your favours;[1] but I am, indeed, much pleased to be thus distinguished by you.

"I am ashamed to tell you that my 'Shakespeare' will not be out so soon as I promised my subscribers: but I did not promise them more than I promised myself. It will, however, be published before summer.

"I have sent you a bundle of proposals, which, I think, do not profess more than I have hitherto performed. I have printed many of the plays, and have hitherto left very few passages unexplained; where I am quite at loss, I confess my ignorance, which is seldom done by commentators.

"I have, likewise, enclosed twelve receipts; not that I impose upon you the trouble of pushing them, with more importunity than may seem proper, but that you may rather have more than fewer than you shall want. The proposals you will disseminate as there shall be an opportunity. I once printed them at length in the 'Chronicle,' and some of my friends (I believe Mr. Murphy, who formerly wrote the 'Gray's-Inn Journal') introduced them with a splendid encomium.

"Since the 'Life of Browne,' I have been a little engaged, from time to time, in the 'Literary Magazine,' but not very lately. I have not the collection by me, and therefore cannot draw out a catalogue of my own parts, but will do it, and send it. Do not buy them, for I will gather all those that have anything of mine in them, and send them to Mrs. Burney, as a small token of gratitude for the regard which she is pleased to bestow upon me. I am, Sir, your most obliged and most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"London, March 8, 1758."

Dr. Burney has kindly favoured me with the following memorandum, which I take the liberty to insert in his own genuine easy style. I love to exhibit sketches of my illustrious friend by various eminent hands.

"Soon after this, Mr. Burney, during a visit to the capital, had an interview with him in Gough-square, where he dined and

[1] This letter was an answer, to one in which was enclosed a draft for the payment of some subscriptions to his *Shakespeare*. B.

drank tea with him, and was introduced to the acquaintance of Mrs. Williams. After dinner, Mr. Johnson proposed to Mr. Burney to go up with him into his garret, which being accepted, he there found about five or six Greek folios, a deal writing-desk, and a chair and a half. Johnson giving to his guest the entire seat, tottered himself on one with only three legs and one arm. Here he gave Mr. Burney Mrs. Williams's history, and shewed him some volumes of his 'Shakespeare' already printed, to prove that he was in earnest. Upon Mr. Burney's opening the first volume, at the 'Merchant of Venice,' he observed to him, that he seemed to be more severe on Warburton than Theobald. 'O poor Tib!' said Johnson, 'he was ready knocked down to my hands; Warburton stands between me and him.' 'But, Sir,' said Mr. Burney, 'you'll have Warburton upon your bones, won't you?' 'No, Sir; he'll not come out: he'll only growl in his den.' 'But you think, Sir, that Warburton is a superior critic to Theobald?' —'O, Sir, he'd make two-and-fifty Theobalds, cut into slices! The worst of Warburton is, that he has a rage for saying something, when there's nothing to be said'[1]—Mr. Burney then asked him whether he had seen the letter which Warburton had written in answer to a pamphlet addressed 'To the most impudent man alive.' He answered in the negative. Mr. Burney told him it was supposed to be written by Mallet. The controversy now raged between the friends of Pope and Bolingbroke; and Warburton and Mallet were the leaders of the several parties. Mr. Burney asked him then if he had seen Warburton's book against Bolingbroke's Philosophy? 'No, Sir; I have never read Bolingbroke's impiety, and therefore am not interested about its confutation.'"

On the fifteenth of April he began a new periodical paper, entitled the "IDLER," * which came out every Saturday in a weekly newspaper, called "The Universal Chronicle, or Weekly Gazette," published by Newbery.[2] These essays were continued till April 5, 1760. Of one hundred and three, their total number, twelve were contributed by his friends; of which, Numbers 33, 93, and 96, were

[1] It may be noted that the editors of the *Cambridge Shakespeare* have expressed their emphatic dissent from Johnson's comparison of Theobald and Warburton. They consider Theobald to have been incomparably superior not only to Warburton who immediately succeeded him, but to all his predecessors.

[2] It was not published by Newbery, but by J. Payne, till 1759, when R. Stevens took it over.

written by Mr. Thomas Warton; No. 67 by Mr. Langton; and Nos. 76, 79, and 82, by Sir Joshua Reynolds: the concluding words of No. 82, "and pollute his canvas with deformity," being added by Johnson; as Sir Joshua informed me.

The "IDLER" is evidently the work of the same mind which produced the "RAMBLER," but has less body and more spirit. It has more variety of real life and greater facility of language. He describes the miseries of idleness, with the lively sensations of one who has felt them; and in his private memorandums while engaged in it, we find "This year I hope to learn diligence" (*Prayers and Meditations*, p. 30). Many of these excellent essays were written as hastily as an ordinary letter. Mr. Langton remembers Johnson, when on a visit at Oxford, asking him one evening how long it was till the post went out; and on being told about half an hour, he exclaimed, "Then we shall do very well." He upon this instantly sat down and finished an "Idler," which it was necessary should be in London the next day. Mr. Langton having signified a wish to read it, "Sir," said he, "you shall not do more than I have done myself." He then folded it up, and sent it off.

Yet there are in the "Idler" several papers which shew as much profundity of thought, and labour of language, as any of this great man's writings. No. 14, "Robbery of time;" No. 24, "Thinking;" No. 41, "Death of a friend;" No. 43, "Flight of time;" No. 51, "Domestic greatness unattainable;" No. 52, "Self-denial;" No. 58, "Actual, how short of fancied, excellence;" No. 89, "Physical evil moral good;" and his concluding paper on "The horror of the last," will prove this assertion. I know not why a motto, the usual trapping of periodical papers, is prefixed to very few of the "Idlers," as I have heard Johnson commend the custom; and he never could be at a loss for one, his memory being stored with innumerable passages of the classics. In this series of essays he exhibits admirable instances of grave humour, of which he had an uncommon share. Nor on some occasions has he repressed that power of sophistry which he possessed in so

eminent a degree. In No. 11, he treats with the utmost contempt the opinion that our mental faculties depend, in some degree, upon the weather; an opinion, which they who have never experienced its truth are not to be envied, and of which he himself could not but be sensible, as the effects of weather upon him were very visible. Yet thus he declaims:

"Surely, nothing is more reproachful to a being endowed with reason, than to resign its powers to the influence of the air, and live in dependence on the weather and the wind for the only blessings which nature has put into our power, tranquillity and benevolence.—This distinction of seasons is produced only by imagination operating on luxury. To temperance, every day is bright; and every hour is propitious to diligence. He that shall resolutely excite his faculties, or exert his virtues, will soon make himself superior to the seasons; and may set at defiance the morning mist and the evening damp, the blasts of the east, and the clouds of the south."

Alas! it is too certain, that where the frame has delicate fibres, and there is a fine sensibility, such influences of the air are irresistible. He might as well have bid defiance to the ague, the palsy, and all other bodily disorders. Such boasting of the mind is false elevation.

"I think the Romans call it Stoicism."

But in this number of his "Idler" his spirits seem to run riot; for in the wantonness of his disquisition he forgets, for a moment, even the reverence for that which he held in high respect; and describes "the attendant on a *Court*," as one "whose business is to watch the looks of a being weak and foolish as himself."

His unqualified ridicule of rhetorical gesture or action, is not, surely, a test of truth; yet we cannot help admiring how well it is adapted to produce the effect which he wished.

"Neither the judges of our laws, nor the representatives of our people, would be much affected by laboured gesticulations, or believe any man the more because he rolled his eyes, or puffed his cheeks, or spread abroad his arms, or stamped the ground, or

thumped his breast; or turned his eyes sometimes to the ceiling, and sometimes to the floor."

A casual coincidence with other writers or an adoption of a sentiment or image which has been found in the writings of another, and afterwards appears in the mind as one's own, is not unfrequent. The richness of Johnson's fancy, which could supply his page abundantly on all occasions, and the strength of his memory, which at once detected the real owner of any thought, made him less liable to the imputation of plagiarism than, perhaps, any of our writers. In the "Idler," however, there is a paper, in which conversation is assimilated to a bowl of punch, where there is the same train of comparison as in a poem by Blacklock, in his collection published in 1756; in which a parallel is ingeniously drawn between human life and that liquor. It ends,

> "Say, then, physicians of each kind,
> Who cure the body or the mind,
> What harm in drinking can there be,
> Since punch and life so well agree?"

To the "Idler," when collected in volumes, he added, beside the Essay on Epitaphs, and the Dissertation on those of Pope, an Essay on the Bravery of the English common Soldiers. He, however, omitted one of the original papers, which, in the folio copy, is No. 22.[1]

"TO THE REVEREND MR. THOMAS WARTON.

"DEAR SIR,

"YOUR notes upon my poet were very acceptable. I beg that you will be so kind as to continue your searches. It will be reputable to my work, and suitable to your professorship, to have something of yours in the notes. As you have given no directions about your name, I shall therefore put it. I wish your brother would take the same trouble. A commentary must arise from the fortuitous discoveries of many men in devious walks of literature. Some of your remarks are on plays already printed:

[1] This paper may be found in Stockdale's supplemental volume of Johnson's *Miscellaneous Pieces*. B.

but I purpose to add an Appendix of Notes, so that nothing comes too late.

"You give yourself too much uneasiness, dear Sir, about the loss of the papers.[1] The loss is nothing, if nobody has found them; nor even then, perhaps, if the numbers be known. You are not the only friend that has had the same mischance. You may repair your want out of a stock, which is deposited with Mr. Allen, of Magdalen Hall; or out of a parcel which I have just sent to Mr. Chambers[2] for the use of any body that will be so kind as to want them. Mr. Langton is well; and Miss Roberts, whom I have at last brought to speak, upon the information which you gave me, that she had something to say. I am, &c.

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"[London,] April 14, 1758."

"TO THE SAME.

"DEAR SIR,

"You will receive this by Mr. Baretti, a gentleman particularly entitled to the notice and kindness of the Professor of poesy. He has time but for a short stay, and will be glad to have it filled up with as much as he can hear and see.

"In recommending another to your favour, I ought not to omit thanks for the kindness which you have shewn to myself. Have you any more notes on Shakespeare? I shall be glad of them.

"I see your pupil sometimes,[3] his mind is as exalted as his stature. I am half afraid of him; but he is no less amiable than formidable. He will, if the forwardness of his spring be not blasted, be a credit to you, and to the University. He brings some of my plays[4] with him, which he has my permission to shew you, on condition you will hide them from everybody else. I am, dear Sir, &c.

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"[London,] June 1, 1758."

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[1] Receipts for *Shakespeare*. *Warton*. B.

[2] Then of Lincoln College. Now Sir Robert Chambers, one of the Judges in India. *Warton*. B.

[3] Mr. Langton. *Warton*. B.

[4] Part of the impression of the *Shakespeare*, which Dr. Johnson conducted alone, and published by subscription. This edition came out in 1765. *Warton*. B.

'TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ. AT LANGTON, NEAR SPILSBY, LINCOLNSHIRE.

"DEAR SIR,

"I SHOULD be sorry to think that what engrosses the attention of my friend, should have no part of mine. Your mind is now full of the fate of Dury;[1] but his fate is past, and nothing remains but to try what reflection will suggest to mitigate the terrors of a violent death, which is more formidable at the first glance, than on a nearer and more steady view. A violent death is never very painful; the only danger is, lest it should be unprovided. But if a man can be supposed to make no provision for death in war, what can be the state that would have awakened him to the care of futurity? When would that man have prepared himself to die, who went to seek death without preparation? What then can be the reason why we lament more him that dies of a wound, than him that dies of a fever? A man that languishes with disease, ends his life with more pain, but with less virtue: he leaves no example to his friends, nor bequeaths any honour to his descendants. The only reason why we lament a soldier's death, is, that we think he might have lived longer; yet this cause of grief is common to many other kinds of death, which are not so passionately bewailed. The truth is, that every death is violent which is the effect of accident; every death, which is not gradually brought on by the miseries of age, or when life is extinguished for any other reason than that it is burnt out. He that dies before sixty, of a cold or consumption, dies, in reality, by a violent death; yet his death is borne with patience, only because the cause of his untimely end is silent and invisible. Let us endeavour to see things as they are, and then inquire whether we ought to complain. Whether to see life as it is, will give us much consolation, I know not; but the consolation which is drawn from truth, if any there be, is solid and durable; that which may be derived from error, must be, like its original, fallacious and fugitive. I am, dear, dear Sir, your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"Sept. 21, 1758."

[1] Major-General Alexander Dury, of the first regiment of Foot-Guards, who fell in the gallant discharge of his duty, near St. Cas, in the well-known unfortunate expedition against France, in 1758. His lady and Mr. Langton's mother were sisters. He left an only son, Lieutenant-Colonel Dury, who has a company in the same regiment. B.

"TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ. AT LANGTON, LINCOLNSHIRE.

"DEAREST SIR,

"I MUST have indeed slept very fast, not to have been awakened by your letter. None of your suspicions are true; I am not much richer than when you left me; and, what is worse, my omission of an answer to your first letter, will prove that I am not much wiser. But I go on as I formerly did, designing to be some time or other both rich and wise; and yet cultivate neither mind nor fortune. Do you take notice of my example, and learn the danger of delay. When I was as you are now, towering in confidence of twenty-one, little did I suspect that I should be at forty-nine what I now am.

"But you do not seem to need my admonition. You are busy in acquiring and in communicating knowledge, and while you are studying, enjoy the end of study, by making others wiser and happier. I was much pleased with the tale that you told me of being tutor to your sisters. I, who have no sisters nor brothers, look with some degree of innocent envy on those who may be said to be born to friends; and cannot see, without wonder, how rarely that native union is afterwards regarded. It sometimes, indeed, happens, that some supervenient cause of discord may overpower this original amity; but it seems to me more frequently thrown away with levity, or lost by negligence, than destroyed by injury or violence. We tell the ladies that good wives make good husbands; I believe it is a more certain position that good brothers make good sisters.

"I am satisfied with your stay at home, as Juvenal with his friend's retirement to Cumæ: I know that your absence is best, though it be not best for me.

"'Quamvis digressu veteris confusus amici,
Laudo tamen vacuis quod sedem figere Cumis
Destinet, atque unum civem donare Sibyllæ.' iii. 2.

"*Langton* is a good *Cumæ*, but who must be Sibylla? Mrs. Langton is as wise as Sibyl, and as good; and will live, if my wishes can prolong life, till she shall in time be as old. But she differs in this, that she has not scattered her precepts in the wind, at least not those which she bestowed upon you.

"The two Wartons just looked into the town, and were taken to see 'Cleone,' where, David [1] says, they were starved for want of company to keep them warm. David and Doddy [2] have had a

[1] Mr. Garrick. B.

[2] Mr. Dodsley, the author of *Cleone*. B.

new quarrel, and, I think, cannot conveniently quarrel any more. 'Cleone' was well acted by all their characters, but Bellamy left nothing to be desired. I went the first night, and supported it as well as I might; for Doddy, you know, is my patron, and I would not desert him. The play was very well received. Doddy, after the danger was over, went every night to the stage-side, and cried at the distress of poor Cleone.

"I have left off housekeeping, and therefore made presents of the game which you were pleased to send me. The pheasant I gave to Mr. Richardson,[1] the bustard to Dr. Lawrence, and the pot I placed with Miss Williams, to be eaten by myself. She desires that her compliments and good wishes may be accepted by the family; and I make the same request for myself.

"Mr. Reynolds has within these few days raised his price to twenty guineas a head, and Miss is much employed in miniatures.[2] I know not any body [else] whose prosperity has increased since you left them.

"Murphy is to have his 'Orphan of China' acted next month; and is therefore, I suppose, happy. I wish I could tell you of any great good to which I was approaching, but at present my prospects do not much delight me; however, I am always pleased when I find that you, dear Sir, remember, your affectionate, humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"Jan. 9, 1759."

In 1759, in the month of January, his mother died at the great age of ninety, an event which deeply affected him; not that "his mind had acquired no firmness by the contemplation of mortality" (Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, p. 395); but that his reverential affection for her was not abated by years, as indeed he retained all his tender feelings even to the latest period of his life. I have been told, that he regretted much his not having gone to visit his mother for several years previous to her death. But he was constantly engaged in literary labours which confined him to London; and though he had not the comfort of

[1] Mr. Samuel Richardson, author of *Clarissa*. B.

[2] In 1787 Reynolds's prices were 200 guineas for the whole length, 100 for the half-length, 70 for the kitcat, and 50 for what is called the three-quarters. Latterly he must have raised his prices higher, for Horace Walpole mentions that he received 1,000 guineas for his picture of the three Ladies Waldegrave.

seeing his aged parent, he contributed liberally to her support.

"TO MRS. JOHNSON, IN LICHFIELD.[1]

"HONOURED MADAM,

"THE account which Miss [Porter] gives me of your health, pierces my heart. GOD comfort, and preserve you, and save you, for the sake of Jesus Christ.

"I would have Miss read to you from time to time the Passion of our Saviour, and sometimes the sentences in the Communion Service, beginning—*Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

"I have just now read a medical book, which inclines me to think that a strong infusion of the bark would do you good. Do, dear Mother, try it.

"Pray, send me your blessing, and forgive all that I have done amiss to you. And whatever you would have done, and what debts you would have paid first, or any thing else that you would direct, let Miss put it down; I shall endeavour to obey you.

"I have got twelve guineas to send you, but unhappily am at a loss how to send it to-night. If I cannot send it to-night, it will come by the next post.

"Pray, do not omit any thing mentioned in this letter. GOD bless you for ever and ever. I am, your dutiful Son,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"Jan. 13, 1759."

"TO MISS PORTER, AT MRS. JOHNSON'S, IN LICHFIELD.

"MY DEAR MISS,

"I THINK myself obliged to you beyond all expression of gratitude for your care of my dear mother. GOD grant it may not be without success. Tell Kitty,[2] that I shall never forget her

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[1] The seven following letters were inserted in the fourth edition by Malone.

[2] Catharine Chambers, Mrs. Johnson's maid-servant. She died in October, 1767. See *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 71: "Sunday, Oct. 18, 1767. Yesterday, Oct. 17, I took my leave for ever of my dear old friend, Catharine Chambers, who came to live with my mother about 1724, and has been but little parted from us since. She buried my father, my brother, and my mother. She is now fifty-eight years old." *Malone.*

tenderness for her mistress. Whatever you can do, continue to do. My heart is very full.

"I hope you received twelve guineas on Monday. I found a way of sending them by means of the Post-master, after I had written my letter, and hope they came safe. I will send you more in a few days. God bless you all. I am, my dear, your most obliged, and most humble servant,

"Sam. Johnson.

"Jan. 16, 1759.

"Over the leaf is a letter to my Mother."

"Dear Honoured Mother,

"Your weakness afflicts me beyond what I am willing to communicate to you. I do not think you unfit to face death, but I know not how to bear the thought of losing you. Endeavour to do all you [can] for yourself. Eat as much as you can.

"I pray often for you; do you pray for me.—I have nothing to add to my last letter. I am, dear, dear Mother, your dutiful Son,

"Sam. Johnson.

"Jan. 16, 1759."

"to mrs. johnson, in lichfield.

"Dear Honoured Mother,

"I fear you are too ill for long letters; therefore I will only tell you, you have from me all the regard that can possibly subsist in the heart. I pray God to bless you for evermore, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

"Let Miss write to me every post, however short. I am, dear Mother, your dutiful Son,

"Sam. Johnson.

"Jan. 18, 1759."

"to miss porter, at mrs. johnson's, in lichfield.

"Dear Miss,

"I will, if it be possible, come down to you. God grant I may yet [find] my dear mother breathing and sensible. Do not tell her, lest I disappoint her. If I miss to write next post, I am on the road. I am, my dearest Miss, your most humble servant,

"Sam. Johnson.

"Jan. 20, 1759."

"*On the other side.*

"DEAR HONOURED MOTHER,

"NEITHER your condition nor your character make it fit for me to say much. You have been the best mother, and I believe the best woman in the world. I thank you for your indulgence to me, and beg forgiveness of all that I have done ill, and all that I have omitted to do well. GOD grant you his Holy Spirit, and receive you to everlasting happiness, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen. Lord Jesus receive your spirit. Amen. I am, dear, dear Mother, your dutiful Son,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"Jan. 20, 1759."

"TO MISS PORTER, IN LICHFIELD.

"YOU will conceive my sorrow for the loss of my mother, of the best mother. If she were to live again, surely I should behave better to her. But she is happy, and what is past is nothing to her; and for me, since I cannot repair my faults to her, I hope repentance will efface them. I return you and all those that have been good to her my sincerest thanks, and pray GOD to repay you all with infinite advantage. Write to me, and comfort me, dear child. I shall be glad likewise, if Kitty will write to me. I shall send a bill of 20*l.* in a few days, which I thought to have brought to my mother; but GOD suffered it not. I have not power or composure to say much more. GOD bless you, and bless us all. I am, dear Miss, your affectionate humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"Jan. 23, 1759."

Soon after this event he wrote his "RASSELAS, PRINCE OF ABYSSINIA;" * concerning the publication of which Sir John Hawkins guesses vaguely and idly, instead of having taken the trouble to inform himself with authentic precision. Not to trouble my readers with a repetition of the Knight's reveries, I have to mention, that the late Mr. Strahan the printer told me, that Johnson wrote it, that with the profits he might defray the expense of his mother's funeral, and pay some little debts which she had left. He told Sir Joshua Reynolds, that he composed it in the evenings of one week,[1] sent it to the press in portions as it was

[1] *Rasselas* was published in March or April, 1759. B.

written, and had never since read it over. Mr. Strahan, Mr. Johnson, and Mr. Dodsley, purchased it for a hundred pounds, but afterwards paid him twenty-five pounds more, when it came to a second edition.

Considering the large sums which have been received for compilations, and works requiring not much more genius than compilations, we cannot but wonder at the very low price which he was content to receive for this admirable performance; which, though he had written nothing else, would have rendered his name immortal in the world of literature. None of his writings has been so extensively diffused over Europe; for it has been translated into most, if not all, of the modern languages. This Tale, with all the charms of Oriental imagery, and all the force and beauty of which the English language is capable, leads us through the most important scenes of human life, and shews us that this stage of our being is full of "vanity and vexation of spirit." To those who look no farther than the present life, or who maintain that human nature has not fallen from the state in which it was created, the instruction of this sublime story will be of no avail. But they who think justly, and feel with strong sensibility, will listen with eagerness and admiration to its truth and wisdom. Voltaire's "CANDIDE," written to refute the system of Optimism, which it has accomplished with brilliant success, is wonderfully similar in its plan and conduct to Johnson's "RASSELAS"; insomuch, that I have heard Johnson say, that if they had not been published so closely one after the other that there was not time for imitation, it would have been in vain to deny that the scheme of that which came latest was taken from the other. Though the proposition illustrated by both these works was the same, namely, that in our present state there is more evil than good, the intention of the writers was very different. Voltaire, I am afraid, meant only by wanton profaneness to obtain a sportive victory over religion, and to discredit the belief of a superintending Providence: Johnson meant, by shewing the unsatisfactory nature of things temporal, to direct the hopes of man to things

eternal. "Rasselas," as was observed to me by a very accomplished lady, may be considered as a more enlarged and more deeply philosophical discourse in prose, upon the interesting truth, which in his "Vanity of Human Wishes" he had so successfully enforced in verse.

The fund of thinking which this work contains is such, that almost every sentence of it may furnish a subject of long meditation. I am not satisfied if a year passes without my having read it through; and at every perusal, my admiration of the mind which produced it is so highly raised, that I can scarcely believe that I had the honour of enjoying the intimacy of such a man.

I restrain myself from quoting passages from this excellent work, or even referring to them, because I should not know what to select, or, rather, what to omit. I shall, however, transcribe one, as it shews how well he could state the arguments of those who believe in the appearance of departed spirits; a doctrine which it is a mistake to suppose that he himself ever positively held:

"If all your fear be of apparitions (said the Prince) I will promise you safety: there is no danger from the dead: he that is once buried will be seen no more.

"That the dead are seen no more (said Imlac), I will not undertake to maintain, against the concurrent and unvaried testimony of all ages, and of all nations. There is no people, rude or learned, among whom apparitions of the dead are not related and believed. This opinion, which perhaps prevails as far as human nature is diffused, could become universal only by its truth; those that never heard of one another, would not have agreed in a tale which nothing but experience can make credible. That it is doubted by single cavillers, can very little weaken the general evidence: and some who deny it with their tongues, confess it by their fears."

Notwithstanding my high admiration of "Rasselas," I will not maintain that the "morbid melancholy" in Johnson's constitution may not, perhaps, have made life appear to him more insipid and unhappy than it generally is; for I am sure that he had less enjoyment from it than I have. Yet, whatever additional shade his own particular sensations may have thrown on his representation of life,

attentive observation and close inquiry have convinced me, that there is too much reality in the gloomy picture. The truth, however, is, that we judge of the happiness and misery of life differently at different times, according to the state of our changeable frame. I always remember a remark made to me by a Turkish lady, educated in France: "*Ma foi, Monsieur, notre bonheur dépend de la façon que notre sang circule.*" This have I learnt from a pretty hard course of experience, and would, from sincere benevolence, impress upon all who honour this book with a perusal, that until a steady conviction is obtained, that the present life is an imperfect state, and only a passage to a better, if we comply with the divine scheme of progressive improvement; and also that it is a part of the mysterious plan of Providence, that intellectual beings must "be made perfect through suffering;" there will be a continual recurrence of disappointment and uneasiness. But if we walk with hope in "the mid-day sun" of revelation, our temper and disposition will be such, that the comforts and enjoyments in our way will be relished, while we patiently support the inconveniences and pains. After much speculation and various reasonings, I acknowledge myself convinced of the truth of Voltaire's conclusion, "*Après tout, c'est un monde passable.*" But we must not think too deeply;

> "———where ignorance is bliss,
> 'Tis folly to be wise,"

is, in many respects, more than poetically just. Let us cultivate, under the command of good principles, "*la théorie des sensations agréables;*" and, as Mr. Burke once admirably counselled a grave and anxious gentleman, "live pleasant."

The effect of "Rasselas," and of Johnson's other moral tales, is thus beautifully illustrated by Mr. Courtenay:

> "Impressive truth, in splendid fiction drest,
> Checks the vain wish, and calms the troubled breast;
> O'er the dark mind a light celestial throws,
> And soothes the angry passions to repose;

As oil effus'd illumes and smooths the deep,
When round the bark the swelling surges sweep" (*Literary and Moral Character of Johnson*).

It will be recollected, that during all this year he carried on his "IDLER,"[1] and, no doubt, was proceeding, though slowly, in his edition of "Shakespeare." He, however,

This paper was in such high estimation before it was collected into volumes, that it was seized on with avidity by various publishers of newspapers and magazines, to enrich their publications. Johnson, to put a stop to this unfair proceeding, wrote for *The Universal Chronicle* the following advertisement; in which there is, perhaps, more pomp of words than the occasion demanded: "London, Jan. 5, 1759. ADVERTISEMENT. The proprietors of the paper entitled *The Idler*, having found that those essays are inserted in the newspapers and magazines with so little regard to justice or decency, that *The Universal Chronicle*, in which they first appear, is not always mentioned, think it necessary to declare to the publishers of those collections, that however patiently they have hitherto endured these injuries, made yet more injurious by contempt, they have now determined to endure them no longer. They have already seen essays, for which a very large price is paid, transferred, with the most shameless rapacity, into the weekly or monthly compilations, and their right, at least for the present, alienated from them, before they could themselves be said to enjoy it. But they would not willingly be thought to want tenderness, even for men by whom no tenderness hath been shewn. The past is without remedy, and shall be without resentment. But those who have been thus busy with their sickles in the fields or their neighbours, are henceforward to take notice, that the time of impunity is at an end. Whoever shall, without our leave, lay the hand of rapine upon our papers, is to expect that we shall vindicate our due, by the means which justice prescribes, and which are warranted by the immemorial prescriptions of honourable trade. We shall lay hold, in our turn, on their copies, degrade them from the pomp of wide margin and diffuse typography, contract them into a narrow space, and sell them at an humble price; yet not with a view of growing rich by confiscations, for we think not much better of money got by punishment than by crimes. We shall therefore, when our losses are repaid, give what profit shall remain to the *Magdalens*; for we know not who can be more properly taxed for the support of penitent prostitutes, than prostitutes in whom there yet appears neither penitence nor shame." B.

from that liberality which never failed, when called upon to assist other labourers in literature, found time to translate for Mrs. Lenox's English version of Brumoy, "A Dissertation on the Greek Comedy,"† and "The General Conclusion of the Book."†

An inquiry into the state of foreign countries was an object that seems at all times to have interested Johnson. Hence Mr. Newbery found no great difficulty in persuading him to write the Introduction* to a collection of voyages and travels published by him under the title of "The World Displayed": the first volume of which appeared this year, and the remaining volumes in subsequent years.

I would ascribe to this year the following letter to a son of one of his early friends at Lichfield, Mr. Joseph Simpson, Barrister, and author of a tract entitled "Reflections on the Study of the Law."

"TO JOSEPH SIMPSON, ESQ.

"DEAR SIR,

"YOUR father's inexorability not only grieves but amazes me: he is your father; he was always accounted a wise man; nor do I remember any thing to the disadvantage of his good nature; but in his refusal to assist you there is neither good nature, fatherhood, nor wisdom. It is the practice of good nature to overlook faults which have already, by the consequences, punished the delinquent. It is natural for a father to think more favourably than others of his children; and it is always wise to give assistance, while a little help will prevent the necessity of greater.

"If you married imprudently, you miscarried at your own hazard, at an age when you had a right of choice. It would be hard if the man might not choose his own wife, who has a right to plead before the Judges of his country.

"If your imprudence has ended in difficulties and inconveniences, you are yourself to support them; and, with the help of a little better health, you would support them and conquer them. Surely, that want which accident and sickness produces, is to be supported in every region of humanity, though there were neither friends nor fathers in the world. You have certainly from your father the highest claim of charity, though none of right: and therefore I would counsel you to omit no decent nor manly

degree of importunity. Your debts in the whole are not large, and of the whole but a small part is troublesome. Small debts are like small shot; they are rattling on every side, and can scarcely be escaped without a wound: great debts are like cannon; of loud noise, but little danger. You must, therefore, be enabled to discharge petty debts, that you may have leisure, with security, to struggle with the rest. Neither the great nor the little debts disgrace you. I am sure you have my esteem for the courage with which you contracted them, and the spirit with which you endure them. I wish my esteem could be of more use. I have been invited, or have invited myself, to several parts of the kingdom; and will not incommode my dear Lucy by coming to Lichfield, while her present lodging is of any use to her. I hope, in a few days, to be at leisure, and to make visits. Whither I shall fly is matter of no importance. A man unconnected is at home every where; unless he may be said to be at home no where. I am sorry, dear Sir, that where you have parents, a man of your merits should not have a home. I wish I could give it you. I am, my dear Sir, affectionately yours,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

He now refreshed himself by an excursion to Oxford, of which the following short characteristical notice, in his own words, is preserved:—" . . . . . is now making tea for me. I have been in my gown ever since I came here. It was, at my first coming, quite new and handsome. I have swum thrice, which I had disused for many years. I have proposed to Vansittart[1] climbing over the wall, but he has refused me. And I have clapped my hands till they are sore, at Dr. King's speech."[2]

His negro servant, Francis Barber, having left him, and been some time at sea, not pressed as has been supposed, but with his own consent, it appears from a letter to John Wilkes, Esq., from Dr. Smollett, that his master kindly interested himself in procuring his release from a

[1] Dr. Robert Vansittart, of the ancient and respectable family of that name in Berkshire. He was eminent for learning and worth, and much esteemed by Dr. Johnson. B. He was Professor of Civil Law at Oxford, and Recorder of Windsor.

[2] *Gentleman's Magazine*, April 1785. B. The speech was delivered on the installation of the Earl of Westmoreland as Chancellor of the University, July 7, 1759.

state of life of which Johnson always expressed the utmost abhorrence. He said, "No man will be a sailor who has contrivance enough to get himself into a jail; for being in a ship is being in a jail, with the chance of being drowned" (*Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*). And at another time, "A man in a jail has more room, better food, and commonly better company" (*Ibid*). The letter was as follows:

"Chelsea, March 16, 1759.

"DEAR SIR,

"I AM again your petitioner, in behalf of that great CHAM[1] of literature, Samuel Johnson. His black servant, whose name is Francis Barber, has been pressed on board the 'Stag' Frigate, Captain Angel, and our lexicographer is in great distress. He says, the boy is a sickly lad, of a delicate frame, and particularly subject to a malady in his throat, which renders him very unfit for his Majesty's service. You know what matter of animosity the said Johnson has against you: and I dare say you desire no other opportunity of resenting it, than that of laying him under an obligation. He was humble enough to desire my assistance on this occasion, though he and I were never cater-cousins; and I gave him to understand that I would make application to my friend Mr. Wilkes, who, perhaps, by his interest with Dr. Hay and Mr. Elliot, might be able to procure the discharge of his lacquey. It would be superfluous to say more on the subject, which I leave to your own consideration; but I cannot let slip this opportunity of declaring that I am, with the most inviolable esteem and attachment, dear Sir, your affectionate obliged humble servant,

"T. SMOLLETT."

Mr. Wilkes, who upon all occasions has acted, as a private gentleman, with most polite liberality, applied to

[1] In my first edition this word was printed *Chum*, as it appears in one of Mr. Wilkes's Miscellanies, and I animadverted on Dr. Smollett's ignorance; for which let me propitiate the *manes* of that ingenious and benevolent gentleman. CHUM was certainly a mistaken reading for CHAM, the title of the sovereign of Tartary, which is well applied to Johnson, the Monarch of Literature: and was an epithet familiar to Smollett. See *Roderick Random*, chap. 56. For this correction I am indebted to Lord Palmerston, whose talents and literary acquirements accord well with his respectable pedigree of TEMPLE. B.

his friend Sir George Hay, then one of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty; and Francis Barber was discharged, as he has told me, without any wish of his own. He found his old master in chambers in the Inner Temple, and returned to his service.

What particular new scheme of life Johnson had in view this year I have not discovered; but that he meditated one of some sort, is clear from his private devotions, in which we find "the change of outward things which I am now to make;" and, "Grant me the grace of thy Holy Spirit, that the course which I am now beginning may proceed according to thy laws, and end in the enjoyment of thy favour" (*Prayers and Meditations*). But he did not, in fact, make any external or visible change.[1]

At this time there being a competition among the architects of London to be employed in the building of Blackfriars Bridge, a question was very warmly agitated whether semicircular or elliptical arches were preferable. In the design offered by Mr. Mylne the elliptical form was adopted, and therefore it was the great object of his rivals to attack it. Johnson's regard for his friend Mr. Gwyn induced him to engage in this controversy against Mr. Mylne;[2] and after being at considerable pains to

[1] Early in this year he gave up his house in Gough Square, and removed first into chambers in Staple Inn, thence into Gray's Inn, and finally settled down in Inner Temple Lane, where he lived, says Murphy, "in poverty, total idleness, and the pride of literature."

[2] Sir John Hawkins has given a long detail of it, in that manner vulgarly, but significantly, called *rigmarole;* in which, amidst an ostentatious exhibition of arts and artists, he talks of "Proportions of a column being taken from that of the human figure, and *adjusted by Nature*—masculine and feminine—in a man, *sesquioctave* of the head, and in a woman *sesquinonal;*" nor has he failed to introduce a jargon of musical terms, which do not seem much to correspond with the subject, but serve to make up the heterogeneous mass. To follow the Knight through all this, would be a useless fatigue to myself, and not a little disgusting to my readers. I shall, therefore, only make a few remarks upon his statement.—He seems to exult in having detected

study the subject, he wrote three several letters in the "Gazetteer," in opposition to his plan.

Johnson in procuring "From a person eminently skilled in mathematics and the principles of architecture, answers to a string of questions drawn up by himself, touching the comparative strength of semicircular and elliptical arches." Now I cannot conceive how Johnson could have acted more wisely. Sir John complains, that the opinion of that excellent mathematician, Mr. Thomas Simpson, did not preponderate in favour of the semicircular arch. But he should have known, that however eminent Mr. Simpson was in the higher parts of abstract mathematical science, he was little versed in mixed and practical mechanics. Mr. Muller, of Woolwich Academy, the scholastic father of all the great engineers which this country has employed for forty years, decided the question by declaring clearly in favour of the elliptical arch. It is ungraciously suggested, that Johnson's motive for opposing Mr. Mylne's scheme may have been his prejudice against him as a native of North Britain; when, in truth, as has been stated, he gave the aid of his able pen to a friend, who was one of the candidates; and so far was he from having any illiberal antipathy to Mr. Mylne, that he afterwards lived with that gentleman upon very agreeable terms of acquaintance, and dined with him at his house. Sir John Hawkins, indeed, gives full vent to his own prejudice in abusing Blackfriars Bridge, calling it "An edifice, in which beauty and symmetry are in vain sought for; by which the citizens of London have perpetuated their own disgrace, and subjected a whole nation to the reproach of foreigners." Whoever has contemplated, *placido lumine*, this stately, elegant, and airy structure, which has so fine an effect, especially on approaching the capital on that quarter, must wonder at such unjust and ill-tempered censure; and I appeal to all foreigners of good taste, whether this bridge be not one of the most distinguished ornaments of London? As to the stability of the fabric, it is certain that the City of London took every precaution to have the best Portland Stone for it; but as this is to be found in the quarries belonging to the public, under the direction of the Lords of the Treasury, it so happened that Parliamentary interests, which are often the bane of fair pursuits, thwarted their endeavours. Notwithstanding this disadvantage, it is well known that not only has Blackfriars Bridge never sunk either in its foundation or in its arches, which were so much the subject of contest, but any injuries which it has suffered from the effects of severe frosts have been already, in some measure, repaired with sounder stone, and every necessary renewal can be completed at a moderate expense. B.

If it should be remarked, that this was a controversy which lay quite out of Johnson's way, let it be remembered, that after all, his employing his powers of reasoning and eloquence upon a subject which he had studied on the moment, is not more strange than what we often observe in lawyers, who, as *quicquid agunt homines* in the matter of law-suits, are sometimes obliged to pick up a temporary knowledge of an art or science, of which they understood nothing till their brief was delivered, and appear to be much masters of it. In like manner, members of the Legislature frequently introduce and expatiate upon subjects of which they have informed themselves for the occasion.

In 1760 he wrote "An Address of the Painters to George III. on his Accession to the Throne of these Kingdoms," † which no monarch ever ascended with more sincere congratulations from his people. Two generations of foreign princes had prepared their minds to rejoice in having again a King, who gloried in being "born a Briton."[1] He also wrote for Mr. Baretti the Dedication † of his Italian and English Dictionary, to the Marquis of Abreu, then Envoy-Extraordinary from Spain at the court of Great Britain.

Johnson was now either very idle, or very busy with his "Shakespeare"; for I can find no other public composition by him except an Introduction to the "Proceedings of the Committee for clothing the French Prisoners"; * one of the many proofs that he was ever awake to the calls of humanity; and an account which he gave in the "Gentleman's Magazine" of Mr. Tytler's acute and able vindication of Mary Queen of Scots.* The generosity of Johnson's feeling shines forth in the following sentence:

"It has now been fashionable, for near half a century, to defame and vilify the House of Stuart, and to exalt and magnify the reign of Elizabeth. The Stuarts have found few apologists, for the dead cannot pay for praise; and who will, without reward,

[1] "Born and educated in this country, I glory in the name of Briton." George the Third's first speech to Parliament.

oppose the tide of popularity? Yet there remains still among us, not wholly extinguished, a zeal for truth, a desire of establishing right in opposition to fashion."

In this year I have not discovered a single private letter written by him to any of his friends. It should seem, however, that he had at this period a floating intention of writing a history of the recent and wonderful successes of the British arms in all quarters of the globe; for among his resolutions or memorandums, September 18, there is, "Send for books for Hist. of War" (*Prayers and Meditations*). How much is it to be regretted that this intention was not fulfilled! His majestic expression would have carried down to the latest posterity the glorious achievements of his country, with the same fervent glow which they produced on the mind at the time. He would have been under no temptation to deviate in any degree from truth, which he held very sacred, or to take a licence, which a learned divine told me he once seemed in a conversation jocularly to allow to historians. "There are," said he, "inexcusable lies, and consecrated lies. For instance, we are told that on the arrival of the news of the unfortunate battle of Fontenoy, every heart beat, and every eye was in tears. Now we know that no man eat his dinner the worse, but there *should* have been all this concern; and to say there was (smiling), may be reckoned a consecrated lie."

This year Mr. Murphy, having thought himself ill-treated by the Reverend Dr. Franklin, who was one of the writers of "The Critical Review," published an indignant vindication in "A Poetical Epistle to Samuel Johnson, A.M.," in which he compliments Johnson in a just and elegant manner:

> "Transcendant Genius! whose prolific vein
> Ne'er knew the frigid poet's toil and pain;
> To whom Apollo opens all his store,
> And every Muse presents her sacred lore:
> Say, pow'rful Johnson, whence thy verse is fraught
> With so much grace, such energy of thought;

Whether thy JUVENAL instructs the age
In chaster numbers, and new-points his rage;
Or fair IRENE sees, alas! too late
Her innocence exchang'd for guilty state;
Whate'er you write, in every golden line
Sublimity and elegance combine;
Thy nervous phrase impresses every soul,
While harmony gives rapture to the whole."

Again, towards the conclusion:

"Thou then, my friend, who see'st the dang'rous strife
In which some demon bids me plunge my life,
To the Aonian fount direct my feet,
Say, where the Nine thy lonely musings meet;
Where warbles to thy ear the sacred throng,
Thy moral sense, thy dignity of song;
Tell, for you can, by what unerring art
You wake to finer feelings every heart;
In each bright page some truth important give,
And bid to future times thy RAMBLER live."

I take this opportunity to relate the manner in which an acquaintance first commenced between Dr. Johnson and Mr. Murphy. During the publication of "The Gray's Inn Journal," a periodical paper which was successfully carried on by Mr. Murphy alone when a very young man, he happened to be in the country with Mr. Foote; and having mentioned that he was obliged to go to London in order to get ready for the press one of the numbers of that Journal, Foote said to him, "You need not go on that account. Here is a French magazine, in which you will find a very pretty Oriental tale; translate that, and send it to your printer." Mr. Murphy having read the tale, was highly pleased with it, and followed Foote's advice. When he returned to town, this tale was pointed out to him in the "Rambler," from whence it had been translated into the French magazine. Mr. Murphy then waited upon Johnson, to explain this curious incident. His talents, literature, and gentleman-like manners, were soon perceived by Johnson, and a friendship was formed which was never broken.[1]

[1] Arthur Murphy (1730—1805), dramatic and miscellaneous

"TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ. AT LANGTON, NEAR SPILSBY, LINCOLNSHIRE.

"DEAR SIR,

"YOU that travel about the world, have more materials for letters, than I who stay at home: and should, therefore, write with frequency equal to your opportunities. I should be glad to have all England surveyed by you, if you would impart your observations in narratives as agreeable as your last. Knowledge is always to be wished to those who can communicate it well. While you have been riding and running, and seeing the tombs of the learned, and the camps of the valiant, I have only stayed at home, and intended to do great things, which I have not done. Beau [Beauclerk] went away to Cheshire, and has not yet found his way back. Chambers passed the vacation at Oxford.

"I am very sincerely solicitous for the preservation or curing of Mr. Langton's sight, and am glad that the chirurgeon at Coventry gives him so much hope. Mr. Sharpe is of opinion that the tedious maturation of the cataract is a vulgar error, and that it may be removed as soon as it is formed. This notion deserves to be considered; I doubt whether it be universally true; but if it be true in some cases, and those cases can be distinguished, it may save a long and uncomfortable delay.

"Of dear Mrs. Langton you gave me no account; which is the less friendly, as you know how highly I think of her, and how much I interest myself in her health. I suppose you told her of my opinion, and likewise suppose it was not followed; however, I still believe it to be right.

"Let me hear from you again, wherever you are, or whatever you are doing; whether you wander or sit still, plant trees or make *Rustics*,[1] play with your sisters or muse alone; and in return

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writer, barrister, and actor. He seems to have had little, if any, practice at the bar, and on the stage he failed dismally; but many of his plays were successful, and with his other writings brought him a fair share of money and fame. But he was always in trouble till at the close of his life he was made a Commissioner in Bankruptcy and received a Government pension of £200. Previous to this he had, according to Rogers' *Table-Talk*, "Eaten himself out of every tavern from the other side of Temple Bar to the West end of the town." Besides his plays and miscellaneous journalism he edited Johnson's and Fielding's works, wrote a life of Garrick, and translated Tacitus and Sallust.

[1] Essays with that title, written about this time by Mr. Langton, but not published. B.

I will tell you the success of Sheridan, who at this instant is playing Cato, and has already played Richard twice.[1] He had more company the second than the first night, and will make I believe a good figure in the whole, though his faults seem to be very many; some of natural deficience, and some of laborious affectation. He has, I think, no power of assuming either that dignity or elegance which some men, who have little of either in common life, can exhibit on the stage. His voice when strained is unpleasing, and when low is not always heard. He seems to think too much on the audience, and turns his face too often to the galleries.

"However, I wish him well; and among other reasons, because I like his wife.[2] Make haste to write to, dear Sir, your most affectionate servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"Oct. 18, 1760."

In 1761, Johnson appears to have done little. He was still, no doubt, proceeding in his edition of Shakespeare; but what advances he made in it cannot be ascertained. He certainly was at this time not active; for in his scrupulous examination of himself on Easter Eve, he laments, in his too rigorous mode of censuring his own conduct, that his life, since the communion of the preceding Easter, had been "dissipated and useless" (*Prayers and Meditations*). He, however, contributed this year the Preface* to Rolt's "Dictionary of Trade and Commerce," in which he displays such a clear and comprehensive knowledge of the subject, as might lead the reader to think that its author had devoted all his life to it. I asked him, whether he knew much of Rolt, and of his work. "Sir," said he, "I never saw the man, and never read the book. The booksellers wanted a Preface to a Dictionary of Trade and Commerce, I knew very well what such a Dictionary should be, and I wrote a Preface accordingly." Rolt, who wrote a great deal for the booksellers, was, as Johnson told me, a singular

[1] Thomas Sheridan (1721–88), son of Swift's friend and father of Richard Brinsley.

[2] Mrs. Sheridan was author of *Memoirs of Miss Sydney Biddulph*, a novel of great merit, and of some other pieces. B.

character. Though not in the least acquainted with him, he used to say, "I am just come from Sam. Johnson." This was a sufficient specimen of his vanity and impudence. But he gave a more eminent proof of it in our sister kingdom, as Dr. Johnson informed me. When Akenside's "Pleasures of the Imagination" first came out, he did not put his name to the poem. Rolt went over to Dublin, published an edition of it, and put his own name to it. Upon the fame of this he lived for several months, being entertained at the best tables as "the ingenious Mr. Rolt."[1] His conversation, indeed, did not discover much of the fire of a poet; but it was recollected, that both Addison and Thomson were equally dull till excited by wine. Akenside having been informed of this imposition, vindicated his right by publishing the poem with its real author's name. Several instances of such literary fraud have been detected. The Reverend Dr. Campbell, of St. Andrew's, wrote "An Inquiry into the original of Moral Virtue," the manuscript of which he sent to Mr. Innes, a clergyman in England, who was his countryman and his acquaintance. Innes published it with his own name to it; and before the imposition was discovered, obtained considerable promotion as a reward of his merit.[2] The celebrated Dr. Hugh Blair, and his cousin Mr George Bannatine, when students in divinity, wrote a poem entitled "The Resurrection," copies of which were handed about in manuscript. They were, at length, very much surprised to see a pompous edition of it in folio, dedicated to the Princess Dowager of Wales, by a Dr. Douglas, as

[1] I have had inquiry made in Ireland as to this story, but do not find it recollected there. I give it on the authority of Dr. Johnson, to which may be added that of the *Biographical Dictionary*, and *Biographia Dramatica;* in both of which it has stood many years. Mr. Malone observes, that the truth probably is, not that an edition was published with Rolt's name in the title-page, but that the poem being then anonymous, Rolt acquiesced in its being attributed to him in conversation. B.

[2] I have both the books. Innes was the clergyman who brought Psalmanazar to England, and was an accomplice in his extraordinary fiction. B.

his own. Some years ago a little novel entitled "The Man of Feeling," was assumed by Mr. Eccles, a young Irish clergyman, who was afterwards drowned near Bath. He had been at the pains to transcribe the whole book, with blottings, interlineations, and corrections, that it might be shewn to several people as an original. It was, in truth, the production of Mr. Henry Mackenzie, an attorney in the Exchequer at Edinburgh, who is the author of several other ingenious pieces; but the belief with regard to Mr. Eccles became so general, that it was thought necessary for Messieurs Strahan and Cadell to publish an advertisement in the newspapers, contradicting the report, and mentioning that they purchased the copyright of Mr. Mackenzie. I can conceive this kind of fraud to be very easily practised with successful effrontery. The *Filiation* of a literary performance is difficult of proof; seldom is there any witness present at its birth. A man, either in confidence or by improper means, obtains possession of a copy of it in manuscript, and boldly publishes it as his own. The true author, in many cases, may not be able to make his title clear. Johnson, indeed, from the peculiar features of his literary offspring, might bid defiance to any attempt to appropriate them to others;

> "But Shakespeare's magic could not copied be,
> Within that circle none durst walk but he."

He this year lent his friendly assistance to correct and improve a pamphlet written by Mr. Gwyn, the architect, entitled "Thoughts on the Coronation of George III." *

Johnson had now for some years admitted Mr. Baretti to his intimacy; nor did their friendship cease upon their being separated by Baretti's revisiting his native country, as appears from Johnson's letters to him.

"TO MR. JOSEPH BARETTI, AT MILAN.[1]

"You reproach me very often with parsimony of writing; but

[1] The originals of Dr. Johnson's three letters to Mr. Baretti, which are among the very best he ever wrote, were communicated to the proprietors of that instructive and elegant monthly miscellany, *The European Magazine*, in which they first appeared B.

you may discover by the extent of my paper, that I design to recompense rarity by length. A short letter to a distant friend is, in my opinion, an insult like that of a slight bow or cursory salutation ;—a proof of unwillingness to do much, even where there is a necessity of doing something. Yet it must be remembered, that he who continues the same course of life in the same place, will have little to tell. One week and one year are very like one another. The silent changes made by him are not always perceived, and if they are not perceived, cannot be recounted. I have risen and lain down, talked and mused, while you have roved over a considerable part of Europe; yet I have not envied my Baretti any of his pleasures, though, perhaps, I have envied others his company : and I am glad to have other nations made acquainted with the character of the English, by a traveller who has so nicely inspected our manners, and so successfully studied our literature. I received your kind letter from Falmouth, in which you gave me notice of your departure for Lisbon ; and another from Lisbon, in which you told me, that you were to leave Portugal in a few days. To either of these how could any answer be returned ? I have had a third from Turin, complaining that I have not answered the former. Your English style still continues in its purity and vigour. With vigour your genius will supply it ; but its purity must be continued by close attention. To use two languages familiarly, and without contaminating one by the other, is very difficult : and to use more than two, is hardly to be hoped. The praises which some have received for their multiplicity of languages, may be sufficient to excite industry, but can hardly generate confidence.[1]

"I know not whether I can heartily rejoice at the kind reception which you have found, or at the popularity to which you are exalted. I am willing that your merit should be distinguished; but cannot wish that your affections may be gained. I would have you happy wherever you are : yet I would have you wish to return to England. If ever you visit us again, you will find the kindness of your friends undiminished. To tell you how many inquiries are made after you, would be tedious, or if not tedious, would be vain ; because you may be told in a very few words, that all who knew you wish you well; and that all that you embraced at your departure, will caress you at your return : therefore do not let Italian academicians nor Italian ladies drive us from

[1] Malone says that "Perhaps no one ever made himself so completely master of a foreign language as he [Baretti] did of English." He published an entertaining account of these travels, first in Italian and afterwards, with additions, in English : *Journey from London to Genoa*, Lond. 1770.

your thoughts. You may find among us what you will leave behind, soft smiles and easy sonnets. Yet I shall not wonder if all our invitations should be rejected: for there is a pleasure in being considerable at home, which is not easily resisted.

"By conducting Mr. Southwell to Venice, you fulfilled, I know, the original contract: yet I would wish you not wholly to lose him from your notice, but to recommend him to such acquaintance as may best secure him from suffering by his own follies, and to take such general care both of his safety and his interest as may come within your power. His relations will thank you for any such gratuitous attention: at least they will not blame you for any evil that may happen, whether they thank you or not for any good.

"You know that we have a new King and a new Parliament. Of the new Parliament Fitzherbert is a member. We were so weary of our old King, that we are much pleased with his successor; of whom we are so much inclined to hope great things, that most of us begin already to believe them. The young man is hitherto blameless; but it would be unreasonable to expect much from the immaturity of juvenile years, and the ignorance of princely education. He has been long in the hands of the Scots, and has already favoured them more than the English will contentedly endure. But perhaps, he scarcely knows whom he has distinguished, or whom he has disgusted.

"The Artists have instituted a yearly Exhibition of pictures and statues, in imitation, as I am told, of foreign academies. This year was the second Exhibition.[1] They please themselves much with the multitude of spectators, and imagine that the English School will rise in reputation. Reynolds is without a rival, and continues to add thousands to thousands, which he deserves, among other excellences, by retaining his kindness for Baretti. This Exhibition has filled the heads of the Artists and lovers of art. Surely life, if it be not long, is tedious, since we are forced to call in the assistance of so many trifles to rid us of our time, of that time which never can return.

"I know my Baretti will not be satisfied with a letter in which I give him no account of myself: yet what account shall I give him? I have not, since the day of our separation, suffered or done any thing considerable. The only change in my way of life

[1] At the room of the Society of Arts in the Strand. From the success of these exhibitions was incorporated a Society of Artists in 1765, and three years later by secession from this was constituted the Royal Academy. See Leslie and Taylor's *Life of Reynolds*, and Northcote's *Memoirs of Reynolds*.

is, that I have frequented the theatre more than in former seasons. But I have gone thither only to escape from myself. We have had many new farces, and the comedy called 'The Jealous Wife,'[1] which, though not written with much genius, was yet so well adapted to the stage, and so well exhibited by the actors, that it was crowded for near twenty nights. I am digressing from myself to the playhouse; but a barren plan must be filled with episodes. Of myself I have nothing to say, but that I have hitherto lived without the concurrence of my own judgment; yet I continue to flatter myself, that, when you return, you will find me mended. I do not wonder that, where the monastic life is permitted, every order finds votaries, and every monastery inhabitants. Men will submit to any rule, by which they may be exempted from the tyranny of caprice and of chance. They are glad to supply by external authority their own want of constancy and resolution, and court the government of others, when long experience has convinced them of their own inability to govern themselves. If I were to visit Italy, my curiosity would be more attracted by convents than by palaces; though I am afraid that I should find expectation in both places equally disappointed, and life in both places supported with impatience and quitted with reluctance. That it must be so soon quitted, is a powerful remedy against impatience; but what shall free us from reluctance? Those who have endeavoured to teach us to die well, have taught few to die willingly: yet I cannot but hope that a good life might end at last in a contented death.

"You see to what a train of thought I am drawn by the mention of myself. Let me now turn my attention upon you. I hope you take care to keep an exact journal, and to register all occurrences and observations; for your friends here expect such a book of travels as has not been often seen. You have given us good specimens in your letters from Lisbon. I wish you had stayed longer in Spain, for no country is less known to the rest of Europe; but the quickness of your discernment must make amends for the celerity of your motions. He that knows which way to direct his view, sees much in a little time.

"Write to me very often, and I will not neglect to write to you; and I may, perhaps, in time, get something to write: at least, you will know by my letters, whatever else they may have or want, that I continue to be your most affectionate friend,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"[London,] June 10, 1761."

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[1] By the elder Colman. The principal parts were played by Garrick, Mrs. Pritchard, and Mrs. Clive.

In 1762 he wrote for the Reverend Dr. Kennedy, Rector of Bradley in Derbyshire, in a strain of very courtly elegance, a Dedication to the King * of that gentleman's work, entitled "A complete System of Astronomical Chronology, unfolding the Scriptures." He had certainly looked at this work before it was printed; for the concluding paragraph is undoubtedly of his composition, of which let my readers judge:

"Thus have I endeavoured to free Religion and History from the darkness of a disputed and uncertain chronology; from difficulties which have hitherto appeared insuperable, and darkness which no luminary of learning has hitherto been able to dissipate. I have established the truth of the Mosaical account, by evidence which no transcription can corrupt, no negligence can lose, and no interest can pervert. I have shewn that the universe bears witness to the inspiration of its historian, by the revolution of its orbs and the succession of its seasons; *that the stars in their courses fight against* incredulity, that the works of God give hourly confirmation to the *law*, the *prophets*, and the *gospel*, of which *one day telleth another, and one night certifieth another;* and that the validity of the sacred writings never can be denied, while the moon shall increase and wane, and the sun shall know his going down."

He this year wrote also the Dedication † to the Earl of Middlesex of Mrs. Lenox's "Female Quixote," and the Preface to the "Catalogue of the Artists' Exhibition." †

The following letter, which, on account of its intrinsic merit, it would have been unjust both to Johnson and the public to have withheld, was obtained for me by the solicitation of my friend Mr. Seward:

"TO DR. STAUNTON (NOW SIR GEORGE STAUNTON, BARONET).[1]

"DEAR SIR,

"I MAKE haste to answer your kind letter, in hope of

[1] George Leonard Staunton (1737—1801), an Irishman who studied the profession of medicine in France, and practised it with great success in the West Indies. He invested his fortune in the island of Grenada, and lost it when that island was taken by the French in 1779. In 1781 he accompanied Lord Macartney to Madras, and in 1792 went with him as secretary on the famous Embassy to China, of which he afterwards published an account. For his services in India he was created a baronet and pensioned by the Company.

hearing again from you before you leave us. I cannot but regret that a man of your qualifications should find it necessary to seek an establishment in Guadaloupe, which if a peace should restore to the French, I shall think it some alleviation of the loss, that it must restore likewise Dr. Staunton to the English.

"It is a melancholy consideration, that so much of our time is necessarily to be spent upon the care of living, and that we can seldom obtain ease in one respect but by resigning it in another; yet I suppose we are by this dispensation not less happy in the whole, than if the spontaneous bounty of Nature poured all that we want into our hands. A few, if they were left thus to themselves, would, perhaps, spend their time in laudable pursuits; but the greater part would prey upon the quiet of each other, or, in the want of other subjects, would prey upon themselves.

"This, however, is our condition, which we must improve and solace as we can; and though we cannot choose always our place of residence, we may in every place find rational amusements, and possess in every place the comforts of piety and a pure conscience.

"In America there is little to be observed except natural curiosities. The new world must have many vegetables and animals with which philosophers are but little acquainted. I hope you will furnish yourself with some books of natural history, and some glasses and other instruments of observation. Trust as little as you can to report; examine all you can by your own senses. I do not doubt but you will be able to add much to knowledge, and, perhaps, to medicine. Wild nations trust to simples; and, perhaps, the Peruvian bark is not the only specific which those extensive regions may afford us.

"Wherever you are, and whatever be your fortune, be certain, dear Sir, that you carry with you my kind wishes; and that whether you return hither, or stay in the other hemisphere, to hear that you are happy will give pleasure to, Sir, your most affectionate humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"June 1, 1762."

A lady having at this time solicited him to obtain the Archbishop of Canterbury's patronage to have her son sent to the University, one of those solicitations which are too frequent, where people, anxious for a particular object, do not consider propriety, or the opportunity which the persons whom they solicit have to assist them, he wrote to her the following answer; with a copy of which I am

favoured by the Reverend Dr. Farmer, Master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge.

"MADAM,

"I HOPE you will believe that my delay in answering your letter could proceed only from my unwillingness to destroy any hope that you had formed. Hope is itself a species of happiness, and, perhaps, the chief happiness which this world affords: but, like all other pleasures immoderately enjoyed, the excesses of hope must be expiated by pain; and expectations improperly indulged, must end in disappointment. If it be asked, what is the improper expectation which it is dangerous to indulge, experience will quickly answer, that it is such expectation as is dictated not by reason, but by desire; expectation raised, not by the common occurrences of life, but by the wants of the expectant; an expectation that requires the common course of things to be changed, and the general rules of action to be broken.

"When you made your request to me, you should have considered, Madam, what you were asking. You ask me to solicit a great man, to whom I never spoke, for a young person whom I had never seen, upon a supposition which I had no means of knowing to be true. There is no reason why, amongst all the great, I should choose to supplicate the Archbishop, nor why, among all the possible objects of his bounty, the Archbishop should choose your son. I know, Madam, how unwillingly conviction is admitted, when interest opposes it; but surely, Madam, you must allow, that there is no reason why that should be done by me, which every other man may do with equal reason, and which, indeed, no man can do properly, without some very particular relation both to the Archbishop and to you. If I could help you in this exigence by any proper means, it would give me pleasure; but this proposal is so very remote from usual methods, that I cannot comply with it, but at the risk of such answer and suspicions as I believe you do not wish me to undergo.

"I have seen your son this morning; he seems a pretty youth, and will, perhaps, find some better friend than I can procure him; but though he should at last miss the University, he may still be wise, useful, and happy. I am, Madam, your most humble servant,

"June 8, 1762." "SAM. JOHNSON.

"TO MR. JOSEPH BARETTI, AT MILAN.

"London, July 20, 1762.

"SIR,

"HOWEVER justly you may accuse me for want of punctuality in correspondence, I am not so far lost in negligence as to omit the opportunity of writing to you, which Mr. Beauclerk's passage through Milan affords me.

"I suppose you received the 'Idlers,' and I intend that you shall soon receive 'Shakespeare,' that you may explain his works to the ladies of Italy, and tell them the story of the editor, among the other strange narratives with which your long residence in this unknown region has supplied you.

"As you have now been long away, I suppose your curiosity may pant for some news of your old friends. Miss Williams and I live much as we did. Miss Cotterell still continues to cling to Mrs. Porter, and Charlotte is now big of the fourth child. Mr. Reynolds gets six thousand a year. Levett is lately married, not without much suspicion that he has been wretchedly cheated in his match.[1] Mr. Chambers is gone this day, for the first time, the circuit with the Judges. Mr. Richardson[2] is dead of an apoplexy, and his second daughter has married a merchant.

"My vanity or my kindness makes me flatter myself that you would rather hear of me than of those whom I have mentioned; but of myself I have very little which I care to tell. Last winter I went down to my native town, where I found the streets much narrower and shorter than I thought I had left them, inhabited by a new race of people, to whom I was very little known. My playfellows were grown old, and forced me to suspect that I was no longer young. My only remaining friend has changed his principles, and was become the tool of the predominant faction. My daughter-in-law, from whom I expected most, and whom I met with sincere benevolence, has lost the beauty and gaiety of

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[1] Levett married when near sixty a woman of the town who had persuaded him that she was nearly related to a rich man who kept her out of her fortune, she on her part supposing him to have been a physician in large practice. She soon left him, and was tried for picking pockets at the Old Bailey, defended herself, and was acquitted. A separation was then effected. Levett returned to Johnson, and lived with him for the rest of his life.

[2] Samuel Richardson, author of *Clarissa Harlowe*, &c. He died July 4, 1761, aged 72.

youth, without having gained much of the wisdom of age. I wandered about for five days, and took the first convenient opportunity of returning to a place, where, if there is not much happiness, there is, at least, such a diversity of good and evil, that slight vexations do not fix upon the heart.

"I think in a few weeks to try another excursion; though to what end? Let me know, my Baretti, what has been the result of your return to your own country: whether time has made any alteration for the better, and whether, when the first raptures of salutation were over, you did not find your thoughts confessed their disappointment.

"Moral sentences appear ostentatious and tumid, when they have no greater occasions than the journey of a wit to his own town; yet such pleasures and such pains make up the general mass of life; and as nothing is little to him that feels it with great sensibility, a mind able to see common incidents in their real state, is disposed by very common incidents to very serious contemplations. Let us trust that a time will come, when the present moment shall be no longer irksome; when we shall not borrow all our happiness from hope, which at last is to end in disappointment.

"I beg that you will shew Mr. Beauclerk all the civilities which you have in your power; for he has always been kind to me.

"I have lately seen Mr. Stratico, Professor of Padua, who has told me of your quarrel with an Abbot of the Celestine order; but had not the particulars very ready in his memory. When you write to Mr. Marsili, let him know that I remember him with kindness.

"May you, my Baretti, be very happy at Milan, or some other place nearer to, Sir, your most affectionate humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

The accession of George the Third to the throne of these kingdoms, opened a new and brighter prospect to men of literary merit, who had been honoured with no mark of royal favour in the preceding reign. His present Majesty's education in this country, as well as his taste and beneficence, prompted him to be the patron of science and the arts; and early this year Johnson having been represented to him as a very learned and good man, without any certain provision, his Majesty was pleased to grant him a pension of three hundred pounds a year. The Earl of Bute, who was then Prime Minister, had the honour to

announce this instance of his Sovereign's bounty, concerning which, many and various stories, all equally erroneous, have been propagated; maliciously representing it as a political bribe to Johnson, to desert his avowed principles, and become the tool of a Government which he held to be founded in usurpation. I have taken care to have it in my power to refute them from the most authentic information. Lord Bute told me, that Mr. Wedderburne, now Lord Loughborough, was the person who first mentioned this subject to him. Lord Loughborough told me, that the pension was granted to Johnson solely as the reward of his literary merit, without any stipulation whatever, or even tacit understanding that he should write for the Administration. His Lordship added, that he was confident the political tracts which Johnson afterwards did write, as they were entirely consonant with his own opinions, would have been written by him, though no pension had been granted to him.

Mr. Thomas Sheridan and Mr. Murphy, who then lived a good deal both with him and Mr. Wedderburne, told me, that they previously talked with Johnson upon this matter, and that it was perfectly understood by all parties that the pension was merely honorary. Sir Joshua Reynolds told me, that Johnson called on him after his Majesty's intention had been notified to him, and said he wished to consult his friends as to the propriety of his accepting this mark of the royal favour, after the definitions which he had given in his Dictionary of *pension* and *pensioners*. He said he should not have Sir Joshua's answer till the next day, when he would call again, and desired he might think of it. Sir Joshua answered that he was clear to give his opinion then, that there could be no objection to his receiving from the King a reward for literary merit; and that certainly the definitions in his Dictionary were not applicable to him. Johnson, it should seem, was satisfied, for he did not call again till he had accepted the pension, and waited on Lord Bute to thank him. He then told Sir Joshua that Lord Bute said to him expressly, "It is not given you for any

thing you are to do, but for what you have done."[1] His Lordship, he said, behaved in the handsomest manner. He repeated the words twice that he might be sure Johnson heard them, and thus set his mind perfectly at ease. This nobleman, who has been so virulently abused, acted with great honour in this instance, and displayed a mind truly liberal. A Minister of a more narrow and selfish disposition would have availed himself of such an opportunity to fix an implied obligation on a man of Johnson's powerful talents to give him his support.

Mr. Murphy and the late Mr. Sheridan severally contended for the distinction of having been the first who mentioned to Mr. Wedderburne that Johnson ought to have a pension. When I spoke of this to Lord Loughborough, wishing to know if he recollected the prime mover in the business, he said, "All his friends assisted:" and when I told him that Mr. Sheridan strenuously asserted his claim to it, his Lordship said, "He rang the bell." And it is but just to add, that Mr. Sheridan told me, that when he communicated to Dr. Johnson that a pension was to be granted him, he replied in a fervour of gratitude, "The English language does not afford me terms adequate to my feelings on this occasion. I must have recourse to the French. I am *pénétré* with his Majesty's goodness." When I repeated this to Dr. Johnson, he did not contradict it.

His definitions of *pension* and *pensioner*, partly founded on the satirical verses of Pope, which he quotes, may be generally true; and yet everybody must allow, that there may be, and have been, instances of pensions given and received upon liberal and honourable terms. Thus, then, it is clear, that there was nothing inconsistent or humiliating in Johnson's accepting of a pension so unconditionally and so honourably offered to him.

But I shall not detain my readers longer by any words of my own, on a subject on which I am happily enabled

[1] Johnson told Burney that he had himself put the question to Lord Bute: "Pray, my Lord, what am I expected to do for this pension?"

by the favour of the Earl of Bute, to present them with what Johnson himself wrote; his Lordship having been pleased to communicate to me a copy of the following letter to his late father, which does great honour both to the writer, and to the noble person to whom it is addressed:

"TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE EARL OF BUTE.

"My Lord,

"When the bills were yesterday delivered to me by Mr. Wedderburne, I was informed by him of the future favours which his Majesty has, by your Lordship's recommendation, been induced to intend for me.

"Bounty always receives part of its value from the manner in which it is bestowed; your Lordship's kindness includes every circumstance that can gratify delicacy, or enforce obligation. You have conferred your favours on a man who has neither alliance nor interest, who has not merited them by services, nor courted them by officiousness; you have spared him the shame of solicitation, and the anxiety of suspense.

"What has been thus elegantly given, will, I hope, not be reproachfully enjoyed; I shall endeavour to give your Lordship the only recompence which generosity desires,—the gratification of finding that your benefits are not improperly bestowed. I am, my Lord, your Lordship's most obliged, most obedient, and most humble servant,

"Sam. Johnson.

"July 20, 1762."

This year his friend Sir Joshua Reynolds paid a visit of some weeks to his native county, Devonshire, in which he was accompanied by Johnson, who was much pleased with this jaunt, and declared he had derived from it a great accession of new ideas. He was entertained at the seats of several noblemen and gentlemen in the west of England;[1]

[1] At one of these seats Dr. Amyat, physician in London, told me he happened to meet him. In order to amuse him till dinner should be ready, he was taken out to walk in the garden. The master of the house thinking it proper to introduce something scientific into the conversation, addressed him thus: "Are you a botanist, Dr. Johnson?" "No, Sir," answered Johnson, "I am not a botanist, and (alluding, no doubt, to his near-sightedness) should I wish to become a botanist, I must first turn myself into a reptile." B.

but the greatest part of this time was passed at Plymouth, where the magnificence of the navy, the ship-building, and all its circumstances, afforded him a grand subject of contemplation. The Commissioner of the Dock-yard paid him the compliment of ordering the yacht to convey him and his friend to the Eddystone, to which they accordingly sailed. But the weather was so tempestuous that they could not land.

Reynolds and he were at this time the guests of Dr. Mudge, the celebrated surgeon, and now physician of that place, not more distinguished for quickness of parts and variety of knowledge, than loved and esteemed for his amiable manners ; and here Johnson formed an acquaintance with Dr. Mudge's father, that very eminent divine, the Reverend Zachariah Mudge, Prebendary of Exeter, who was idolized in the west, both for his excellence as a preacher and the uniform perfect propriety of his private conduct. He preached a sermon purposely that Johnson might hear him ; and we shall see afterwards that Johnson honoured his memory by drawing his character. While Johnson was at Plymouth, he saw a great many of its inhabitants, and was not sparing of his very entertaining conversation. It was here that he made that frank and truly original confession, that "ignorance, pure ignorance," was the cause of a wrong definition in his Dictionary of the word *pastern* (p. 212), to the no small surprise of the Lady who put the question to him ; who having the most profound reverence for his character, so as almost to suppose him endowed with infallibility, expected to hear an explanation (of what, to be sure, seemed strange to a common reader) drawn from some deep-learned source with which she was unacquainted.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, to whom I was obliged for my information concerning this excursion, mentions a very characteristical anecdote of Johnson while at Plymouth. Having observed, that in consequence of the Dock-yard a new town had arisen about two miles off as a rival to the old ; and knowing from his sagacity, and just observation of human nature, that it is certain if a man hates at all,

he will hate his next neighbour; he concluded that this new and rising town could not but excite the envy and jealousy of the old, in which conjecture he was very soon confirmed; he therefore set himself resolutely on the side of the old town, the *established* town, in which his lot was cast, considering it as a kind of duty to *stand by* it. He accordingly entered warmly into its interests, and upon every occasion talked of the *dockers*, as the inhabitants of the new town were called, as upstarts and aliens. Plymouth is very plentifully supplied with water by a river brought into it from a great distance, which is so abundant that it runs to waste in the town. The Dock, or New Town, being totally destitute of water, petitioned Plymouth that a small portion of the conduit might be permitted to go to them, and this was now under consideration. Johnson, affecting to entertain the passions of the place, was violent in opposition; and half-laughing at himself for his pretended zeal, where he had no concern, exclaimed, "No, no! I am against the *dockers;* I am a Plymouth man. Rogues! let them die of thirst. They shall not have a drop!"

Lord Macartney obligingly favoured me with a copy of the following letter, in his own hand-writing, from the original, which was found, by the present Earl of Bute, among his father's papers.

"TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE EARL OF BUTE.

"My Lord,

"That generosity, by which I was recommended to the favour of his Majesty, will not be offended at a solicitation necessary to make that favour permanent and effectual.

"The pension appointed to be paid me at Michaelmas I have not received, and know not where or from whom I am to ask it. I beg, therefore, that your Lordship will be pleased to supply Mr. Wedderburne with such directions as may be necessary, which, I believe, his friendship will make him think it no trouble to convey to me.

"To interrupt your Lordship, at a time like this, with such petty difficulties, is improper and unseasonable; but your knowledge of the world has long since taught you, that every man's

affairs, however little, are important to himself. Every man hopes that he shall escape neglect; and, with reason, may every man, whose vices do not preclude his claim, expect favour from that beneficence which has been extended to, my Lord, your Lordship's most obliged, and most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"Temple Lane, Nov. 3, 1762."

"TO MR. JOSEPH BARETTI, AT MILAN.

"London, Dec. 21, 1762.

"SIR,

"YOU are not to suppose, with all your conviction of my idleness, that I have passed all this time without writing to my Baretti. I gave a letter to Mr. Beauclerk, who, in my opinion, and in his own, was hastening to Naples for the recovery of his health; but he has stopped at Paris, and I know not when he will proceed. Langton is with him.

"I will not trouble you with speculations about peace and war. The good or ill success of battles and embassies extends itself to a very small part of domestic life: we all have good and evil, which we feel more sensibly than our petty part of public miscarriage or prosperity. I am sorry for your disappointment, with which you seem more touched than I should expect a man of your resolution and experience to have been, did I not know that general truths are seldom applied to particular occasions; and that the fallacy of our self-love extends itself as wide as our interest or affections. Every man believes that mistresses are unfaithful, and patrons capricious; but he excepts his own mistress, and his own patron. We have all learned that greatness is negligent and contemptuous, and that in Courts life is often languished away in ungratified expectation; but he that approaches greatness, or glitters in a Court, imagines that destiny has at last exempted him from the common lot.

"Do not let such evils overwhelm you as thousands have suffered, and thousands have surmounted; but turn your thoughts with vigour to some other plan of life, and keep always in your mind, that, with due submission to Providence, a man of genius has been seldom ruined but by himself. Your Patron's weakness or insensibility will finally do you little hurt, if he is not assisted by your own passions. Of your love I know not the propriety, nor can estimate the power; but in love, as in every other passion of which hope is the essence, we ought always to remember the uncertainty of events. There is, indeed, nothing that so much seduces reason from vigilance, as the thought of passing life with

an amiable woman; and if all would happen that a lover fancies, I know not what other terrestrial happiness would deserve pursuit. But love and marriage are different states. Those who are to suffer the evils together, and to suffer often for the sake of one another, soon lose that tenderness of look, and that benevolence of mind, which arose from the participation of unmingled pleasure and successive amusement. A woman, we are sure, will not be always fair; we are not sure she will always be virtuous; and man cannot retain through life that respect and assiduity by which he pleases for a day or for a month. I do not, however, pretend to have discovered that life has any thing more to be desired than a prudent and virtuous marriage; therefore know not what counsel to give you.

"If you can quit your imagination of love and greatness, and leave your hopes of preferment and bridal raptures to try once more the fortune of literature and industry, the way through France is now open. We flatter ourselves that we shall cultivate, with great diligence, the arts of peace; and every man will be welcome among us who can teach us any thing we do not know. For your part, you will find all your old friends willing to receive you.

"Reynolds still continues to increase in reputation and in riches. Miss Williams, who very much loves you, goes on in the old way. Miss Cotterell is still with Mrs. Porter. Miss Charlotte is married to Dean Lewis, and has three children. Mr. Levett has married a street-walker. But the gazette of my narration must now arrive to tell you, that Bathurst went physician to the army, and died at the Havannah.

"I know not whether I have not sent you word that Huggins and Richardson are both dead. When we see our enemies and friends gliding away before us, let us not forget that we are subject to the general law of mortality, and shall soon be where our doom will be fixed for ever. I pray God to bless you, and am, Sir, your most affectionate humble servant,

"Sam. Johnson.

"Write soon."

In 1763 he furnished to "The Poetical Calendar," published by Fawkes and Woty, a character of Collins,* which he afterwards ingrafted into his entire life of that admirable poet, in the collection of lives which he wrote for the body of English poetry, formed and published by the booksellers of London. His account of the melancholy depression with which Collins was severely afflicted, and

which brought him to his grave, is, I think, one of the most tender and interesting passages in the whole series of his writings. He also favoured Mr. Hoole with the Dedication of his translation of Tasso to the Queen,* which is so happily conceived and elegantly expressed, that I cannot but point it out to the peculiar notice of my readers.[1]

This is to me a memorable year; for in it I had the happiness to obtain the acquaintance of that extraordinary man whose memoirs I am now writing; an acquaintance which I shall ever esteem as one of the most fortunate circumstances in my life. Though then but two-and-twenty, I had for several years read his works with delight and instruction, and had the highest reverence for their author, which had grown up in my fancy into a kind of mysterious veneration, by figuring to myself a state of solemn elevated abstraction, in which I supposed him to live in the immense metropolis of London. Mr. Gentleman, a native of Ireland, who passed some years in Scotland

[1] "MADAM,—To approach the high and illustrious has been in all ages the privilege of Poets; and though translators cannot justly claim the same honour, yet they naturally follow their authors as attendants; and I hope that in return for having enabled TASSO to diffuse his fame through the British dominions, I may be introduced by him to the presence of YOUR MAJESTY. TASSO has a peculiar claim to YOUR MAJESTY's favour, as follower and panegyrist of the House of *Este*, which has one common ancestor with the House of HANOVER; and in reviewing his life it is not easy to forbear a wish that he had lived in a happier time, when he might among the descendants of that illustrious family have found a more liberal and potent patronage. I cannot but observe, MADAM, how unequally reward is proportioned to merit, when I reflect that the happiness which was withheld from TASSO is reserved for me; and that the poem which once hardly procured to its author the countenance of the Princess of Ferrara, has attracted to its translator the favourable notice of a BRITISH QUEEN. Had this been the fate of TASSO, he would have been able to have celebrated the condescension of YOUR MAJESTY in nobler language, but could not have felt it with more ardent gratitude, than, MADAM, YOUR MAJESTY's most faithful and devoted servant." B.

as a player, and as an instructor in the English language, a man whose talents and worth were depressed by misfortunes, had given me a representation of the figure and manner of DICTIONARY JOHNSON as he was then generally called ;[1] and during my first visit to London, which was for three months in 1760, Mr. Derrick the poet, who was Gentleman's friend and countryman, flattered me with hopes that he would introduce me to Johnson, an honour of which I was very ambitious. But he never found an opportunity ; which made me doubt that he had promised to do what was not in his power ; till Johnson some years afterwards told me, "Derrick, Sir, might very well have introduced you. I had a kindness for Derrick, and am sorry he is dead."

In the summer of 1761 Mr. Thomas Sheridan was at Edinburgh, and delivered lectures upon the English Language and Public Speaking to large and respectable audiences. I was often in his company, and heard him frequently expatiate on Johnson's extraordinary knowledge, talents, and virtues, repeat his pointed sayings, describe his particularities, and boast of his being his guest sometimes till two or three in the morning. At his house I hoped to have many opportunities of seeing the Sage, as Mr. Sheridan obligingly assured me I should not be disappointed.

When I returned to London in the end of 1762, to my surprise and regret I found an irreconcilable difference had taken place between Johnson and Sheridan. A pension of two hundred pounds a year had been given to Sheridan. Johnson, who, as has been already mentioned, thought slightingly of Sheridan's art, upon hearing that he was also pensioned, exclaimed, "What ! have they given *him* a pension ? Then it is time for me to give up

[1] As great men of antiquity, such as Scipio *Africanus*, had an epithet added to their names, in consequence of some celebrated action, so my illustrious friend was often called DICTIONARY JOHNSON, from that wonderful achievement of genius and labour, his *Dictionary of the English Language ;* the merit of which I contemplate with more and more admiration. B.

mine." Whether this proceeded from a momentary indignation, as if it were an affront to his exalted merit that a player should be rewarded in the same manner with him, or was the sudden effect of a fit of peevishness, it was unluckily said, and, indeed, cannot be justified. Mr. Sheridan's pension was granted to him not as a player, but as a sufferer in the cause of Government, when he was manager of the Theatre Royal in Ireland, when parties ran high in 1753. And it must also be allowed that he was a man of literature, and had considerably improved the arts of reading and speaking with distinctness and propriety.

Besides, Johnson should have recollected that Mr. Sheridan taught pronunciation to Mr. Alexander Wedderburne, whose sister was married to Sir Harry Erskine, an intimate friend of Lord Bute, who was the favourite of the King; and surely the most outrageous Whig will not maintain, that, whatever ought to be the principle in the disposal of *offices*, a *pension* ought never to be granted from any bias of Court connexion. Mr. Macklin, indeed, shared with Mr. Sheridan the honour of instructing Mr. Wedderburne; and though it was too late in life for a Caledonian to acquire the genuine English cadence, yet so successful were Mr. Wedderburne's instructors, and his own unabating endeavours, that he got rid of the coarse part of the Scotch accent, retaining only as much of the "native wood-note wild," as to mark his country; which, if any Scotchman should affect to forget, I should heartily despise him. Notwithstanding the difficulties which are to be encountered by those who have not had the advantage of an English education, he by degrees formed a mode of speaking, to which Englishmen do not deny the praise of elegance. Hence his distinguished oratory, which he exerted in his own country as an advocate in the Court of Session, and a ruling elder of the *Kirk*, has had its fame and ample reward, in much higher spheres. When I look back on this noble person at Edinburgh, in situations so unworthy of his brilliant powers, and behold LORD LOUGHBOROUGH at London,

the change seems almost like one of the metamorphoses in Ovid; and as his two preceptors, by refining his utterance, gave currency to his talents, we may say in the words of that poet, "*Nam vos mutastis.*"

I have dwelt the longer upon this remarkable instance of successful parts and assiduity; because it affords animating encouragement to other gentlemen of North Britain to try their fortunes in the southern part of the island, where they may hope to gratify their utmost ambition; and now that we are one people by the Union, it would surely be illiberal to maintain that they have not an equal title with the natives of any other part of his Majesty's dominions.

Johnson complained that a man who disliked him repeated his sarcasm to Mr. Sheridan, without telling him what followed, which was, that after a pause he added, "However, I am glad that Mr. Sheridan has a pension, for he is a very good man." Sheridan could never forgive this hasty contemptuous expression. It rankled in his mind; and though I informed him of all that Johnson said, and that he would be very glad to meet him amicably, he positively declined repeated offers which I made, and once went off abruptly from a house where he and I were engaged to dine, because he was told that Dr. Johnson was to be there. I have no sympathetic feeling with such persevering resentment. It is painful when there is a breach between those who have lived together socially and cordially; and I wonder there is not, in all such cases, a mutual wish that it should be healed. I could perceive that Mr. Sheridan was by no means satisfied with Johnson's acknowledging him to be a good man. That could not soothe his injured vanity. I could not but smile, at the same time that I was offended, to observe Sheridan in the "Life of Swift," which he afterwards published, attempting, in the writhings of his resentment, to depreciate Johnson, by characterizing him as "A writer of gigantic fame, in these days of little men;" that very Johnson whom he once so highly admired and venerated.

This rupture with Sheridan deprived Johnson of one of his most agreeable resources for amusement in his lonely evenings; for Sheridan's well-informed, animated, and bustling mind never suffered conversation to stagnate; and Mrs. Sheridan was a most agreeable companion to an intellectual man. She was sensible, ingenious, unassuming, yet communicative. I recollect, with satisfaction, many pleasing hours which I passed with her under the hospitable roof of her husband, who was to me a very kind friend. Her novel, entitled "Memoirs of Miss Sydney Biddulph," contains an excellent moral, while it inculcates a future state of retribution;[1] and what it

[1] My position has been very well illustrated by Mr. Belsham of Bedford, in his *Essay on Dramatic Poetry*. "The fashionable doctrine," says he, "both of moralists and critics in these times is, that virtue and happiness are constant concomitants; and it is regarded as a kind of dramatic impiety to maintain that virtue should not be rewarded, nor vice punished, in the last scene of the last act of every tragedy. This conduct in our modern poets is, however, in my opinion, extremely injudicious; for, it labours in vain to inculcate a doctrine in theory, which every one knows to be false in fact, viz. that virtue in real life is always productive of happiness; and vice of misery. Thus Congreve concludes the tragedy of *The Mourning Bride* with the following foolish couplet:—

'For blessings ever wait on virtuous deeds,
And, though a late, a sure reward succeeds.'

When a man eminently virtuous, a Brutus, a Cato, or a Socrates, finally sinks under the pressure of accumulated misfortune, we are not only led to entertain a more indignant hatred of vice, than if he rose from his distress, but we are inevitably induced to cherish the sublime idea that a day of future retribution will arrive, when he shall receive not merely poetical, but real and substantial justice." *Essays Philosophical, Historical, and Literary*, London, 1791, vol. ii. 8vo. p. 317. This is well reasoned and well expressed. I wish, indeed, that the ingenious author had not thought it necessary to introduce any *instance* of "a man eminently virtuous;" as he would then have avoided mentioning such a ruffian as Brutus under that description. Mr. Belsham discovers in his *Essays* so much reading and thinking, and good composition, that I regret his not having been fortunate enough

teaches is impressed upon the mind by a series of as deep distress as can affect humanity, in the amiable and pious heroine who goes to her grave unrelieved, but resigned, and full of hope of "Heaven's mercy." Johnson paid her this high compliment upon it: "I know not, Madam, that you have a right, upon moral principles, to make your readers suffer so much."

Mr. Thomas Davies the actor, who then kept a bookseller's shop in Russell Street, Covent Garden,[1] told me that Johnson was very much his friend, and came frequently to his house, where he more than once invited me to meet him; but by some unlucky accident or other he was prevented from coming to us.

Mr. Thomas Davies was a man of good understanding and talents, with the advantage of a liberal education. Though somewhat pompous, he was an entertaining companion; and his literary performances have no inconsiderable share of merit. He was a friendly and very hospitable man. Both he and his wife (who has been celebrated for her beauty), though upon the stage for many years, maintained a uniform decency of character: and Johnson esteemed them, and lived in as easy an intimacy with them as with any family he used to visit. Mr. Davies recollected several of Johnson's remarkable sayings, and was one of the best of the many imitators of his voice and manner, while relating them. He increased my impatience more and more to see the extraordinary man whose works I highly valued, and whose conversation was reported to be so peculiarly excellent.

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to be educated a member of our excellent national establishment. Had he not been nursed in nonconformity, he probably would not have been tainted with those heresies (as I sincerely, and on no slight investigation, think them) both in religion and politics, which, while I read, I am sure, with candour, I cannot read without offence. B.

[1] No. 8.—The very place where I was fortunate enough to be introduced to the illustrious subject of this work, deserves to be particularly marked. I never pass by it without feeling reverence and regret. B.

At last, on Monday the 16th of May, when I was sitting in Mr. Davies's back-parlour, after having drunk tea with him and Mrs. Davies, Johnson unexpectedly came into the shop;[1] and Mr. Davies having perceived him through the glass-door in the room in which we were sitting, advancing towards us,—he announced his awful approach to me, somewhat in the manner of an actor in the part of Horatio, when he addresses Hamlet on the appearance of his father's ghost, "Look, my lord, it comes." I found that I had a very perfect idea of Johnson's figure, from the portrait of him painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds soon after he had published his Dictionary, in the attitude of sitting in his easy chair in deep meditation; which was the first picture his friend did for him, which Sir Joshua very kindly presented to me (and from which an engraving has been made for this work). Mr. Davies mentioned my name, and respectfully introduced me to him. I was much agitated; and recollecting his prejudice against the Scotch, of which I had heard much, I said to Davies, "Don't tell where I come from."—"From Scotland," cried Davies, roguishly. "Mr. Johnson," said I, "I do indeed come from Scotland, but I cannot help it." I am willing to flatter myself that I meant this as light pleasantry to soothe and conciliate him, and not as a humiliating abasement at the expense of my country. But however that might be, this speech was somewhat unlucky; for with that quickness of wit for which he was so remark-

[1] Mr. Murphy, in his *Essay on the Life and Genius of Dr. Johnson*, has given an account of this meeting considerably different from mine, I am persuaded without any consciousness of error. His memory, at the end of near thirty years, has undoubtedly deceived him, and he supposes himself to have been present at a scene, which he has probably heard inaccurately described by others. In my note *taken on the very day*, in which I am confident I marked every thing material that passed, no mention is made of this gentleman; and I am sure, that I should not have omitted one so well known in the literary world. It may easily be imagined that this my first interview with Dr. Johnson, with all its circumstances, made a strong impression on my mind, and would be registered with peculiar attention. B.

able, he seized the expression "come from Scotland," which I used in the sense of being of that country; and, as if I had said that I had come away from it, or left it, retorted, "That, Sir, I find, is what a very great many of your countrymen cannot help." This stroke stunned me a good deal; and when we had sat down, I felt myself not a little embarrassed, and apprehensive of what might come next. He then addressed himself to Davies: "What do you think of Garrick? He has refused me an order for the play for Miss Williams, because he knows the house will be full, and that an order would be worth three shillings." Eager to take any opening to get into conversation with him, I ventured to say, "O, Sir, I cannot think Mr. Garrick would grudge such a trifle to you."—"Sir," said he, with a stern look, "I have known David Garrick longer than you have done: and I know no right you have to talk to me on the subject." Perhaps I deserved this check; for it was rather presumptuous in me, an entire stranger, to express any doubt of the justice of his animadversion upon his old acquaintance and pupil.[1] I now felt myself much mortified, and began to think that the hope which I had long indulged of obtaining his acquaintance was blasted. And, in truth, had not my ardour been uncommonly strong, and my resolution uncommonly persevering, so rough a reception might have deterred me for ever from making any farther attempts. Fortunately, however, I remained upon the field not wholly discomfited; and was soon rewarded by hearing some of his conversation, of which I preserved the following short minute, without marking the questions and observations by which it was produced.

[1] That this was a momentary sally against Garrick there can be no doubt; for at Johnson's desire he had, some years before, given a benefit night at his theatre to this very person, by which she had got two hundred pounds. Johnson, indeed, upon all other occasions, when I was in his company, praised the very liberal charity of Garrick. I once mentioned to him, "It is observed, Sir, that you attack Garrick yourself, but will suffer nobody else to do it." Johnson (smiling), "Why, Sir, that is true." B.

"People," he remarked, "may be taken in once, who imagine that an author is greater in private life than other men. Uncommon parts require uncommon opportunities for their exertion.

"In barbarous society, superiority of parts is of real consequence. Great strength or great wisdom is of much value to an individual. But in more polished times there are people to do every thing for money; and then there are a number of other superiorities, such as those of birth and fortune, and rank, that dissipate men's attention, and leave no extraordinary share of respect for personal and intellectual superiority. This is wisely ordered by Providence, to preserve some equality among mankind."

"Sir, this book ('The Elements of Criticism,'[1] which he had taken up) is a pretty essay, and deserves to be held in some estimation, though much of it is chimerical."

Speaking of one who with more than ordinary boldness attacked public measures and the royal family, he said, "I think he is safe from the law, but he is an abusive scoundrel; and instead of applying to my Lord Chief Justice to punish him, I would send half a dozen footmen and have him well ducked."[2]

"The notion of liberty amuses the people of England, and helps to keep off the *tædium vitæ*. When a butcher tells you that *his heart bleeds for his country*, he has, in fact, no uneasy feeling."

"Sheridan will not succeed at Bath with his oratory Ridicule has gone down before him, and, I doubt, Derrick is his enemy.[3]

"Derrick may do very well, as long as he can outrun his character; but the moment his character gets up with him, it is all over."

It is, however, but just to record, that some years afterwards, when I reminded him of this sarcasm, he said,

[1] By Henry Home, Lord Kames.

[2] No doubt John Wilkes.

[3] Mr. Sheridan was then reading lectures upon Oratory at Bath, where Derrick was Master of the Ceremonies; or, as the phrase is, KING. B.

"Well, but Derrick has now got a character that he need not run away from."

I was highly pleased with the extraordinary vigour of his conversation, and regretted that I was drawn away from it by an engagement at another place. I had for a part of the evening, been left alone with him, and had ventured to make an observation now and then, which he received very civilly; so that I was satisfied that though there was a roughness in his manner, there was no ill-nature in his disposition. Davies followed me to the door, and when I complained to him a little of the hard blows which the great man had given me, he kindly took upon him to console me by saying, "Don't be uneasy. I can see he likes you very well."

A few days afterwards I called on Davies, and asked him if he thought I might take the liberty of waiting on Mr. Johnson at his chambers in the Temple. He said I certainly might, and that Mr. Johnson would take it as a compliment. So upon Tuesday the 24th of May, after having been enlivened by the witty sallies of Messieurs Thornton, Wilkes, Churchill, and Lloyd,[1] with whom I had passed the morning, I boldly repaired to Johnson. His chambers were on the first floor of No. 1, Inner Temple Lane, and I entered them with an impression given me by the Rev. Dr. Blair, of Edinburgh, who had been introduced to him not long before, and described his having "found the Giant in his den;" an expression, which, when I came to be pretty well acquainted with Johnson, I repeated to him, and he was diverted at this picturesque account of himself. Dr. Blair had been presented to him by Dr. James Fordyce. At this time the controversy concerning the pieces published by Mr. James Macpherson, as translations of Ossian, was at its height. Johnson had all along denied their authenticity; and, what was still more provoking to their admirers, maintained

[1] These were among the reigning wits of the day. Bonnell Thornton, Churchill, and Lloyd were all old Westminster boys. The two latter died in the following year, Thornton in 1768.

that they had no merit. The subject having been introduced by Dr. Fordyce, Dr. Blair relying on the internal evidence of their antiquity, asked Dr. Johnson whether he thought any man of a modern age could have written such poems? Johnson replied, "Yes, Sir, many men, many women, and many children." Johnson, at this time, did not know that Dr. Blair had just published a Dissertation, not only defending their authenticity, but seriously ranking them with the poems of Homer and Virgil; and when he was afterwards informed of this circumstance, he expressed some displeasure at Dr. Fordyce's having suggested the topic, and said, "I am not sorry that they got thus much for their pains. Sir, it was like leading one to talk of a book, when the author is concealed behind the door."

He received me very courteously; but, it must be confessed, that his apartment, and furniture, and morning dress, were sufficiently uncouth. His brown suit of clothes looked very rusty; he had on a little old shrivelled unpowdered wig, which was too small for his head; his shirt-neck and knees of his breeches were loose; his black worsted stockings ill drawn up; and he had a pair of unbuckled shoes by way of slippers. But all these slovenly particularities were forgotten the moment that he began to talk. Some gentlemen, whom I do not recollect, were sitting with him; and when they went away, I also rose; but he said to me, "Nay, don't go."—"Sir," said I, "I am afraid that I intrude upon you. It is benevolent to allow me to sit and hear you." He seemed pleased with this compliment, which I sincerely paid him, and answered, "Sir, I am obliged to any man who visits me." —I have preserved the following short minute of what passed this day.

"Madness frequently discovers itself merely by unnecessary deviation from the usual modes of the world. My poor friend Smart showed the disturbance of his mind, by falling upon his knees, and saying his prayers in the street, or in any other unusual place. Now although, rationally speaking, it is greater madness not to

pray at all, than to pray as Smart did, I am afraid there are so many who do not pray, that their understanding is not called in question."

Concerning this unfortunate poet, Christopher Smart, who was confined in a mad-house, he had, at another time, the following conversation with Dr. Burney.—BURNEY: "How does poor Smart do, Sir; is he likely to recover?" JOHNSON: "It seems as if his mind had ceased to struggle with the disease; for he grows fat upon it." BURNEY: "Perhaps, Sir, that may be from want of exercise." JOHNSON: "No, Sir; he has partly as much exercise as he used to have, for he digs in the garden. Indeed, before his confinement, he used for exercise to walk to the alehouse; but he was *carried* back again. I did not think he ought to be shut up. His infirmities were not noxious to society. He insisted on people praying with him; and I'd as lief pray with Kit Smart as any one else. Another charge was, that he did not love clean linen; and I have no passion for it."[1]

Johnson continued. "Mankind had a great aversion to intellectual labour; but even supposing knowledge to be easily attainable, more people would be content to be ignorant than would take even a little trouble to acquire it.

"The morality of an action depends on the motive from which we act. If I fling half a crown to a beggar with intention to break his head, and he picks it up and buys victuals with it, the physical effect is good; but, with respect to me, the action is very wrong. So, religious exercises, if not performed with an intention to please GOD, avail us nothing. As our Saviour says of those who perform them from other motives, 'Verily they have their reward.'

[1] This confession is of a piece with a story told by one Wickins, a draper of Lichfield, with whom Johnson was on some terms of intimacy. Showing the Doctor over his house one day he pointed out to him a cold bath, expatiating on its salubrity. "Sir," was the comment, "how do you do?" "Very well, I thank you, Doctor." "Then, Sir, let well alone, and be content. I hate immersion."

"The Christian religion has very strong evidences. It, indeed, appears in some degree strange to reason; but in History we have undoubted facts, against which, in reasoning *à priori*, we have more arguments than we have for them; but then, testimony has great weight, and casts the balance. I would recommend to every man whose faith is yet unsettled, Grotius,—Dr. Pearson,—and Dr. Clarke."

Talking of Garrick, he said, "He is the first man in the world for sprightly conversation."

When I rose a second time he again pressed me to stay, which I did.

He told me, that he generally went abroad at four in the afternoon, and seldom came home till two in the morning. I took the liberty to ask if he did not think it wrong to live thus, and not make more use of his great talents. He owned it was a bad habit. On reviewing, at the distance of many years, my journal of this period, I wonder how, at my first visit, I ventured to talk to him so freely, and that he bore it with so much indulgence.

Before we parted, he was so good as to promise to favour me with his company one evening at my lodgings; and as I took my leave, shook me cordially by the hand. It is almost needless to add, that I felt no little elation at having now so happily established an acquaintance of which I had been so long ambitious. My readers will, I trust, excuse me for being thus minutely circumstantial, when it is considered that the acquaintance of Dr. Johnson was to me a most valuable acquisition, and laid the foundation of whatever instruction and entertainment they may receive from my collections concerning the great subject of the work which they are now perusing.

I did not visit him again till Monday, June 13, at which time I recollect no part of his conversation, except that when I told him I had been to see Johnson ride upon three horses, he said, "Such a man, Sir, should be encouraged; for his performances shew the extent of the human powers in one instance, and thus tend to raise our opinion of the faculties of man. He shews what may be attained by persevering application; so that every man may hope,

that by giving as much application, although perhaps he may never ride three horses at a time, or dance upon a wire, yet he may be equally expert in whatever profession he has chosen to pursue."[1]

He again shook me by the hand at parting, and asked me why I did not come oftener to him. Trusting that I was now in his good graces, I answered, that he had not given me much encouragement, and reminded him of the check I had received from him at our first interview. "Poh, poh!" said he, with a complacent smile, "never mind these things. Come to me as often as you can. I shall be glad to see you."

I had learnt that his place of frequent resort was the Mitre Tavern in Fleet Street, where he loved to sit up late, and I begged I might be allowed to pass an evening with him there soon, which he promised I should. A few days afterwards I met him near Temple-bar, about one o'clock in the morning, and asked if he would then go to the Mitre. "Sir," said he, "it is too late; they won't let us in. But I'll go with you another night with all my heart."

A revolution of some importance in my plan of life had just taken place; for instead of procuring a commission in the Foot-Guards, which was my own inclination, I had, in compliance with my father's wishes, agreed to study the law, and was soon to set out for Utrecht, to hear the lectures of an excellent Civilian in that university, and then to proceed on my travels. Though very desirous of obtaining Dr. Johnson's advice and instruction on the mode of pursuing my studies, I was at this time so occupied, shall I call it? or so dissipated, by the amusements of London, that our next meeting was not till Saturday, June 25, when happening to dine at Clifton's eating-house, in Butcher-row, I was surprised to perceive Johnson come in and take his seat at another table. The mode of dining, or rather being fed, at such houses in London, is well known to many to be particularly

[1] Johnson was an Irishman, and the first to exhibit this form of equestrianism in London. See Walpole's *Letters*, iii. 231.

unsocial, as there is no Ordinary, or united company, but each person has his own mess, and is under no obligation to hold any intercourse with any one. A liberal and full-minded man, however, who loves to talk, will break through this churlish and unsocial restraint. Johnson and an Irish gentleman got into a dispute concerning the cause of some part of mankind being black. "Why, Sir," said Johnson, "it has been accounted for in three ways: either by supposing that they are the posterity of Ham, who was cursed; or that God at first created two kinds of men, one black and another white; or that by the heat of the sun the skin is scorched, and so acquires a sooty hue. This matter has been much canvassed among naturalists, but has never been brought to any certain issue." What the Irishman said is totally obliterated from my mind; but I remember that he became very warm and intemperate in his expressions: upon which Johnson rose, and quietly walked away. When he had retired, his antagonist took his revenge, as he thought, by saying, "He has a most ungainly figure, and an affectation of pomposity, unworthy of a man of genius."

Johnson had not observed that I was in the room. I followed him, however, and he agreed to meet me in the evening at the Mitre. I called on him, and we went thither at nine. We had a good supper, and port wine, of which he then sometimes drank a bottle. The orthodox high-church sound of the MITRE,—the figure and manner of the celebrated SAMUEL JOHNSON,—the extraordinary power and precision of his conversation, and the pride arising from finding myself admitted as his companion, produced a variety of sensations, and a pleasing elevation of mind beyond what I had ever before experienced. I find in my Journal the following minute of our conversation, which, though it will give but a very faint notion of what passed, is, in some degree, a valuable record; and it will be curious in this view, as shewing how habitual to his mind were some opinions which appear in his works.

"Colley Cibber, Sir, was by no means a blockhead;

but by arrogating to himself too much, he was in danger of losing that degree of estimation to which he was entitled. His friends gave out that he *intended* his birth-day Odes should be bad: but that was not the case, Sir; for he kept them many months by him, and a few years before he died he shewed me one of them, with great solicitude to render it as perfect as might be, and I made some corrections, to which he was not very willing to submit. I remember the following couplet in allusion to the King and himself:

> 'Perch'd on the eagle's soaring wing,
> The lowly linnet loves to sing.'

Sir, he had heard something of the fabulous tale of the wren sitting upon the eagle's wing, and he had applied it to a linnet. Cibber's familiar style, however, was better than that which Whitehead has assumed. *Grand* nonsense is insupportable. Whitehead is but a little man to inscribe verses to players."

I did not presume to controvert this censure, which was tinctured with his prejudice against players, but I could not help thinking that a dramatic poet might with propriety pay a compliment to an eminent performer, as Whitehead has very happily done in his verses to Mr. Garrick.

"Sir, I do not think Gray a first-rate poet. He has not a bold imagination, nor much command of words. The obscurity in which he has involved himself will not persuade us that he is sublime. His 'Elegy in a Church-yard,' has a happy selection of images, but I don't like what are called his great things. His Ode which begins

> 'Ruin seize thee, ruthless King,
> Confusion on thy banners wait!'

has been celebrated for its abruptness, and plunging into the subject all at once. But such arts as these have no merit, unless when they are original. We admire them only once; and this abruptness has nothing new in it.

We have had it often before. Nay, we have it in the old song of Johnny Armstrong :

> 'Is there ever a man in all Scotland
> From the highest estate to the lowest degree,' &c.

And then, Sir,

> 'Yes, there is a man in Westmoreland,
> And Johnny Armstrong they do him call.'

There, now, you plunge at once into the subject. You have no previous narration to lead you to it.—The two next lines in that Ode are, I think, very good :

> 'Though fann'd by conquest's crimson wing,
> They mock the air with idle state.'" [1]

Here let it be observed, that although his opinion of Gray's poetry was widely different from mine, and I believe from that of most men of taste, by whom it is with justice highly admired, there is certainly much absurdity in the clamour which has been raised, as if he had been culpably injurious to the merit of that bard, and had been actuated by envy. Alas ! ye little short-sighted critics, could Johnson be envious of the talents of any of his contemporaries ? That his opinion on this subject was what in private and in public he uniformly expressed, regardless of what others might think, we may wonder, and perhaps regret ; but it is shallow and unjust to charge him with expressing what he did not think.

Finding him in a placid humour, and wishing to avail myself of the opportunity which I fortunately had of consulting a sage, to hear whose wisdom, I conceived in the ardour of youthful imagination, that men filled with a noble enthusiasm for intellectual improvement would gladly have resorted from distant lands ;—I opened my mind to him ingenuously, and gave him a little sketch of my life, to which he was pleased to listen with great attention.

[1] My friend Mr. Malone, in his valuable comments on Shakespeare, has traced in that great poet the *disjecta membra* of these lines. B. Gray had already himself done this.

I acknowledged, that though educated very strictly in the principles of religion, I had for some time been misled into a certain degree of infidelity; but that I was come now to a better way of thinking, and was fully satisfied of the truth of the Christian revelation, though I was not clear as to every point considered to be orthodox. Being at all times a curious examiner of the human mind, and pleased with an undisguised display of what had passed in it, he called to me with warmth, "Give me your hand; I have taken a liking to you." He then began to descant upon the force of testimony, and the little we could know of final causes; so that the objections of, Why was it so? or, Why was it not so? ought not to disturb us: adding that he himself had at one period been guilty of a temporary neglect of religion, but that it was not the result of argument, but mere absence of thought.

After having given credit to reports of his bigotry, I was agreeably surprised when he expressed the following very liberal sentiment, which has the additional value of obviating an objection to our holy religion, founded upon the discordant tenets of Christians themselves: "For my part, Sir, I think all Christians, whether Papists or Protestants, agree in the essential articles, and that their differences are trivial, and rather political than religious."

We talked of belief in ghosts. He said, "Sir, I make a distinction between what a man may experience by the mere strength of his imagination, and what imagination cannot possibly produce. Thus, suppose I should think that I saw a form, and heard a voice cry 'Johnson, you are a very wicked fellow, and unless you repent you will certainly be punished;' my own unworthiness is so deeply impressed upon my mind, that I might *imagine* I thus saw and heard, and therefore I should not believe that an external communication had been made to me. But if a form should appear, and a voice should tell me that a particular man had died at a particular place, and a particular hour, a fact which I had no apprehension of, nor any means of knowing, and this fact, with all its circumstances, should afterwards be unquestionably proved,

I should, in that case, be persuaded that I had supernatural intelligence imparted to me."

Here it is proper, once for all, to give a true and fair statement of Johnson's way of thinking upon the question, whether departed spirits are ever permitted to appear in this world, or in any way to operate upon human life. He has been ignorantly misrepresented as weakly credulous upon that subject; and, therefore, though I feel an inclination to disdain and treat with silent contempt so foolish a notion concerning my illustrious friend, yet as I find it has gained ground, it is necessary to refute it. The real fact then is, that Johnson had a very philosophical mind, and such a rational respect for testimony, as to make him submit his understanding to what was authentically proved, though he could not comprehend why it was so. Being thus disposed, he was willing to inquire into the truth of any relation of supernatural agency, a general belief of which has prevailed in all nations and ages. But so far was he from being the dupe of implicit faith, that he examined the matter with a jealous attention, and no man was more ready to refute its falsehood when he had discovered it. Churchill in his poem entitled "The Ghost," availed himself of the absurd credulity imputed to Johnson, and drew a caricature of him under the name of "Pomposo," representing him as one of the believers of the story of a ghost in Cock Lane, which, in the year 1762, had gained very general credit in London. Many of my readers, I am convinced, are to this hour under an impression that Johnson was thus foolishly deceived. It will therefore surprise them a good deal when they are informed upon undoubted authority, that Johnson was one of those by whom the imposture was detected. The story had become so popular that he thought it should be investigated; and in this research he was assisted by the Reverend Dr. Douglas, now Bishop of Salisbury, the great detector of impostures; who informs me, that after the gentlemen who went and examined into the evidence were satisfied of its falsity, Johnson wrote in their presence an account of it, which was published in the newspapers

and "Gentleman's Magazine," and undeceived the world.[1]

Our conversation proceeded. "Sir," said he, "I am a

[1] The account was as follows: "On the night of the 1st of February, many gentlemen, eminent for their rank and character, were, by the invitation of the Reverend Mr. Aldrich, of Clerkenwell, assembled at his house, for the examination of the noises supposed to be made by a departed spirit, for the detection of some enormous crime. About ten at night the gentlemen met in the chamber in which the girl, supposed to be disturbed by a spirit, had, with proper caution, been put to bed by several ladies. They sat rather more than an hour, and hearing nothing, went down stairs, when they interrogated the father of the girl, who denied, in the strongest terms, any knowledge or belief of fraud. The supposed spirit had before publicly promised, by an affirmative knock, that it would attend one of the gentlemen into the vault under the church of St. John, Clerkenwell, where the body is deposited, and give a token of her presence there, by a knock upon her coffin; it was therefore determined to make this trial of the existence or veracity of the supposed spirit. While they were inquiring and deliberating, they were summoned into the girl's chamber by some ladies who were near her bed, and who had heard knocks and scratches. When the gentlemen entered, the girl declared that she felt the spirit like a mouse upon her back, and was required to hold her hands out of bed. From that time, though the spirit was very solemnly required to manifest its existence by appearance, by impression on the hand or body of any present, by scratches, knocks, or any other agency, no evidence of any preternatural power was exhibited. The spirit was then very seriously advertised that the person to whom the promise was made of striking the coffin, was then about to visit the vault, and that the performance of the promise was then claimed. The company at one o'clock went into the church, and the gentleman to whom the promise was made, went with another into the vault. The spirit was solemnly required to perform its promise, but nothing more than silence ensued: the person supposed to be accused by the spirit, then went down with several others, but no effect was perceived. Upon their return they examined the girl, but could draw no confession from her. Between two and three she desired and was permitted to go home with her father. It is, therefore, the opinion of the whole assembly, that the child has some art of making or counterfeiting a particular noise, and that there is no agency of any higher cause." B.

friend to subordination, as most conducive to the happiness of society. There is a reciprocal pleasure in governing and being governed."

"Dr. Goldsmith is one of the first men we now have as an author, and he is a very worthy man too. He has been loose in his principles, but he is coming right."

I mentioned Mallet's tragedy of "ELVIRA," which had been acted the preceding winter at Drury Lane, and that the Honourable Andrew Erskine, Mr. Dempster, and myself, had joined in writing a pamphlet, entitled "Critical Strictures," against it.[1] That the mildness of Dempster's disposition had, however, relented; and he candidly said, "We have hardly a right to abuse this tragedy; for bad as it is, how vain should either of us be to write one not near so good." JOHNSON: "Why no, Sir; this is not just reasoning. You *may* abuse a tragedy, though you cannot write one. You may scold a carpenter who has made you a bad table, though you cannot make a table. It is not your trade to make tables."

When I talked to him of the paternal estate to which I was heir, he said, "Sir, let me tell you, that to be a Scotch landlord, where you have a number of families dependent upon you, and attached to you, is, perhaps, as high a situation as humanity can arrive at. A merchant upon the 'Change of London with 100,000*l.* is nothing; an English duke, with an immense fortune, is nothing: he has no tenants who consider themselves as under his patriarchal care, and who will follow him to the field upon an emergency."

His notion of the dignity of a Scotch landlord had been formed upon what he had heard of the Highland chiefs; for it is long since a lowland landlord has been so curtailed in his feudal authority, that he has little more influence over his tenants than an English landlord; and of late

[1] The *Critical Review*, in which Mallet himself sometimes wrote, characterized this pamphlet as "The crude efforts of envy, petulance, and self-conceit." There being thus three epithets, we the three authors had a humorous contention how each should be appropriated. B.

years most of the Highland chiefs have destroyed, by means too well known, the princely power which they once enjoyed.[1]

He proceeded: "Your going abroad, Sir, and breaking off idle habits, may be of great importance to you. I would go where there are Courts and learned men. There is a good deal of Spain that has not been perambulated. I would have you go thither. A man of inferior talents to yours may furnish us with useful observations upon that country." His supposing me, at that period of life, capable of writing an account of my travels that would deserve to be read, elated me not a little.

I appeal to every impartial reader whether this faithful detail of his frankness, complacency, and kindness to a young man, a stranger and a Scotchman, does not refute the unjust opinion of the harshness of his general demeanour. His occasional reproofs of folly, impudence, or impiety, and even the sudden sallies of his constitutional irritability of temper, which have been preserved for the poignancy of their wit, have produced that opinion among those who have not considered that such instances, though collected by Mrs. Piozzi into a small volume and read over in a few hours, were, in fact, scattered through a long series of years: years, in which his time was chiefly spent in instructing and delighting mankind by his writings and conversation, in acts of piety to God, and good-will to men.

I complained to him that I had not yet acquired much knowledge, and asked his advice as to my studies. He said, "Don't talk of study now. I will give you a plan; but it will require some time to consider of it." "It is very good in you," I replied, "to allow me to be with you thus. Had it been foretold to me some years ago that I should pass an evening with the author of the 'RAMBLER,' how should I have exulted!" What I then

[1] According to Lockhart Boswell alludes here to the substitution of sheep-farming for the old black cattle system by which, as fewer hands were required on the land, many of the clansmen were driven to emigrate to America.

expressed, was sincerely from the heart. He was satisfied that it was, and cordially answered, "Sir, I am glad we have met. I hope we shall pass many evenings and mornings too, together." We finished a couple of bottles of port, and sat till between one and two in the morning.

He wrote this year in the "Critical Review" the account of "Telemachus, a Mask," by the Reverend George Graham, of Eton College. The subject of this beautiful poem was particularly interesting to Johnson, who had much experience of "the conflict of opposite principles," which he describes as "The contention between pleasure and virtue, a struggle which will always be continued while the present system of nature shall subsist; nor can history or poetry exhibit more than pleasure triumphing over virtue, and virtue subjugating pleasure."

As Dr. Oliver Goldsmith will frequently appear in this narrative, I shall endeavour to make my readers in some degree acquainted with his singular character. He was a native of Ireland, and a contemporary with Mr. Burke, at Trinity College, Dublin, but did not then give much promise of future celebrity. He, however, observed to Mr. Malone, that "Though he made no great figure in mathematics, which was a study in much repute there, he could turn an ode of Horace into English better than any of them." He afterwards studied physic at Edinburgh, and upon the Continent, and I have been informed, was enabled to pursue his travels on foot, partly by demanding at Universities to enter the lists as a disputant, by which, according to the custom of many of them, he was entitled to the premium of a crown, when luckily for him his challenge was not accepted; so that, as I once observed to Dr. Johnson, he *disputed* his passage through Europe. He then came to England, and was employed successively in the capacities of an usher to an academy, a corrector of the press, a reviewer, and a writer for a newspaper. He had sagacity enough to cultivate assiduously the acquaintance of Johnson, and his faculties were gradually enlarged by the contemplation of such a model. To me and many

others it appeared that he studiously copied the manner of Johnson, though, indeed, upon a smaller scale.

At this time I think he had published nothing with his name, though it was pretty generally known that *one Dr. Goldsmith* was the author of "An Inquiry into the present State of polite Learning in Europe," and of "The Citizen of the World," a series of letters supposed to be written from London by a Chinese.[1] No man had the art of displaying with more advantage as a writer, whatever literary acquisitions he made. "*Nihil quod tetigit non ornavit.*"[2] His mind resembled a fertile, but thin soil. There was a quick, but not a strong vegetation, of whatever chanced to be thrown upon it. No deep root could be struck. The oak of the forest did not grow there; but the elegant shrubbery and the fragrant parterre appeared in gay succession. It has been generally circulated and believed that he was a mere fool in conversation;[3] but in truth, this has been greatly exaggerated. He had, no doubt, a more than common share of that hurry of ideas which we often find in his countrymen, and which

[1] He had also published *The Bee*, a collection of Essays on "the amusements, follies, and vices in fashion," &c.

[2] See his Epitaph in Westminster Abbey, written by Dr. Johnson. B.

[3] In allusion to this, Mr. Horace Walpole, who admired his writings, said he was "an inspired idiot;" and Garrick described him as one

> "————for shortness call'd Noll,
> Who wrote like an angel, and talk'd like poor Poll."

Sir Joshua Reynolds mentioned to me that he frequently heard Goldsmith talk warmly of the pleasure of being liked, and observe how hard it would be if literary excellence should preclude a man from that satisfaction, which he perceived it often did, from the envy which attended it; and therefore Sir Joshua was convinced that he was intentionally more absurd, in order to lessen himself in social intercourse, trusting that his character would be sufficiently supported by his work. If it indeed was his intention to appear absurd in company, he was often very successful. But with due deference to Sir Joshua's ingenuity, I think the conjecture too refined. B.

sometimes produces a laughable confusion in expressing them. He was very much what the French call *un étourdi*, and from vanity and an eager desire of being conspicuous wherever he was, he frequently talked carelessly without knowledge of the subject, or even without thought. His person was short, his countenance coarse and vulgar, his deportment that of a scholar awkwardly affecting the easy gentleman. Those who were in any way distinguished, excited envy in him to so ridiculous an excess, that the instances of it are hardly credible. When accompanying two beautiful young ladies[1] with their mother on a tour in France, he was seriously angry that more attention was paid to them than to him; and once at the exhibition of the *Fantoccini* in London, when those who sat next him observed with what dexterity a puppet was made to toss a pike, he could not bear that it should have such praise, and exclaimed with some warmth, "Pshaw! I can do it better myself."[2]

He, I am afraid, had no settled system of any sort, so that his conduct must not be strictly scrutinized; but his affections were social and generous, and when he had money he gave it away very liberally. His desire of imaginary consequence predominated over his attention to truth. When he began to rise into notice, he said he had a brother who was Dean of Durham,[3] a fiction so easily detected, that it was wonderful how he should have been so inconsiderate as to hazard it. He boasted to me at this time of the power of his pen in commanding

[1] Miss Hornecks, one of whom is now married to Henry Bunbury, Esq. and the other to Colonel Gwyn. B. Mrs. Gwyn was the "Jessamy Bride." See Goldsmith's *Works*, Globe Ed. p. 691, and Forster's *Life of Goldsmith*.

[2] He went home with Mr. Burke to supper; and broke his shin by attempting to exhibit to the company how much better he could jump over a stick than the puppets. B.

[3] I am willing to hope that there may have been some mistake as to this anecdote, though I had it from a Dignitary of the church. Dr. Isaac Goldsmith, his near relation, was Dean of Cloyne, in 1747. B.

money, which I believe was true in a certain degree, though in the instance he gave he was by no means correct. He told me that he had sold a novel for four hundred pounds. This was his "Vicar of Wakefield." But Johnson informed me, that he had made the bargain for Goldsmith and the price was sixty pounds. "And, Sir," said he, "a sufficient price too, when it was sold; for then the fame of Goldsmith had not been elevated, as it afterwards was, by his 'Traveller'; and the bookseller had such faint hopes of profit by his bargain, that he kept the manuscript by him a long time, and did not publish it till after the 'Traveller' had appeared. Then, to be sure, it was accidentally worth more money."

Mrs. Piozzi and Sir John Hawkins[1] have strangely mis-stated the history of Goldsmith's situation and Johnson's friendly interference, when this novel was sold. I shall give it authentically from Johnson's own exact narration:

"I received one morning a message from poor Goldsmith that he was in great distress, and as it was not in his power to come to me, begging that I would come to him as soon as possible. I sent him a guinea, and promised to come to him directly. I accordingly went as soon as I was drest, and found that his landlady had arrested him for his rent, at which he was in a violent passion. I perceived that he had already changed my guinea, and had got a bottle of Madeira and a glass before him. I put the cork into the bottle, desired he would be calm, and began to talk to him of the means by which he might be extricated. He then told me that he had a novel ready for the press, which he produced to me. I looked into it, and saw its merit; told the landlady I should soon return, and having gone to a bookseller, sold it for sixty pounds. I brought Goldsmith the money, and he discharged his rent, not without rating his landlady in a high tone for having used him so ill."[2]

[1] *Anecdotes of Johnson*, p. 119. *Life of Johnson*, p. 420. B.

[2] It may not be improper to annex here Mrs. Piozzi's account of this transaction, in her own words, as a specimen of the extreme

My next meeting with Johnson was on Friday the 1st of July, when he and I and Dr. Goldsmith supped at the Mitre. I was before this time pretty well acquainted with Goldsmith, who was one of the brightest ornaments of the Johnsonian school. Goldsmith's respectful attachment to Johnson was then at its height; for his own literary reputation had not yet distinguished him so much as to excite a vain desire of competition with his great Master. He had increased my admiration of the goodness of Johnson's heart, by incidental remarks in the course of conversation; such as, when I mentioned Mr. Levett, whom he entertained under his roof, "He is poor and honest, which is recommendation enough to Johnson;" and when I wondered that he was very kind to a man of whom I had heard a very bad character, "He is now become miserable, and that insures the protection of Johnson."

Goldsmith attempting this evening to maintain, I suppose from an affectation of paradox, "that knowledge was not desirable on its own account, for it often was a source of unhappiness:"—JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, that knowledge may in some cases produce unhappiness, I allow. But, upon the whole, knowledge, *per se*, is cer-

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inaccuracy with which all her anecdotes of Dr. Johnson are related, or rather discoloured and distorted. "I have forgotten the year, but it could scarcely, I think, be later than 1765 or 1766, that he was *called abruptly from our house after dinner*, and returning *in about three hours*, said he had been with an enraged author, whose landlady pressed him for payment within doors, while the bailiffs beset him without; that he was *drinking himself drunk* with Madeira, to drown care, and fretting over a novel, which, when *finished*, was to be his *whole fortune*, but *he could not get it done for distraction*, nor could he step out of doors to offer it for sale. Mr. Johnson, therefore, sent away the bottle, and went to the bookseller, recommending the performance, and *desiring some immediate relief;* which when he brought back to the writer, *he called the woman of the house directly to partake of punch, and pass their time in merriment.*" *Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson*, p. 119. B. The novel was sold in 1762, though not published till 1766. Johnson's acquaintance with the Thrales began in 1764.

tainly an object which every man would wish to attain, although, perhaps, he may not take the trouble necessary for attaining it."

Dr. John Campbell, the celebrated political and biographical writer, being mentioned, Johnson said, "Campbell is a man of much knowledge, and has a good share of imagination. His 'Hermippus Redivivus'[1] is very entertaining, as an account of the Hermetic philosophy, and as furnishing a curious history of the extravagances of the human mind. If it were merely imaginary, it would be nothing at all. Campbell is not always rigidly careful of truth in his conversation; but I do not believe there is anything of this carelessness in his books. Campbell is a good man, a pious man. I am afraid he has not been in the inside of a church for many years;[2] but he never passes a church without pulling off his hat. This shews that he has good principles. I used to go pretty often to Campbell's on a Sunday evening till I began to consider that the shoals of Scotchmen who flocked about him might probably say, when any thing of mine was well done, 'Ay, ay, he has learnt this of CAWMELL!'"

He talked very contemptuously of Churchill's poetry,

[1] A translation of a work published at Frankfort in 1742, by Cohausen, a German physician (1675—1750).

[2] I am inclined to think that he was misinformed as to this circumstance. I own I am jealous for my worthy friend Dr. John Campbell. For though Milton could without remorse absent himself from public worship, I cannot. On the contrary, I have the same habitual impressions upon my mind, with those of a truly venerable Judge, who said to Mr. Langton, "Friend Langton, if I have not been at church on Sunday, I do not feel myself easy." Dr. Campbell was a sincerely religious man. Lord Macartney, who is eminent for his variety of knowledge, and attention to men of talents, and knew him well, told me, that when he called on him in a morning, he found him reading a chapter in a Greek New Testament, which he informed his Lordship was his constant practice. The quantity of Dr. Campbell's composition is almost incredible, and his labours brought him large profits. Dr. Joseph Warton told me that Johnson said of him, "He is the richest author that ever grazed the common of literature." B.

observing, that "It had a temporary currency, only from its audacity of abuse, and being filled with living names, and that it would sink into oblivion." I ventured to hint that he was not quite a fair judge, as Churchill had attacked him violently.[1] JOHNSON: "Nay, Sir, I am a very fair judge. He did not attack me violently till he found I did not like his poetry; and his attack on me shall not prevent me from continuing to say what I think of him, from an apprehension that it may be ascribed to resentment. No, Sir, I called the fellow a blockhead at first, and I will call him a blockhead still. However, I will acknowledge that I have a better opinion of him now, than I once had; for he has shewn more fertility than I expected. To be sure, he is a tree that cannot produce good fruit: he only bears crabs. But, Sir, a tree that produces a great many crabs is better than a tree which produces only a few."

In this depreciation of Churchill's poetry I could not agree with him. It is very true that the greatest part of it is upon the topics of the day, on which account, as it brought him great fame and profit at the time, it must proportionably slide out of the public attention as other occasional objects succeed. But Churchill had extraordinary vigour both of thought and expression. His portraits of the players will ever be valuable to the true lovers of the drama, and his strong caricatures of several eminent men of his age, will not be forgotten by the curious. Let me add, that there are in his works many passages which are of a general nature; and his "Prophecy of Famine" is a poem of no ordinary merit. It is, indeed, falsely injurious to Scotland; but therefore may be allowed a greater share of invention.

Bonnell Thornton had just published a burlesque "Ode on St. Cecilia's Day," adapted to the ancient British music, viz. the salt-box, the jews-harp, the marrow-bones and cleaver, the hum-strum or hurdy-gurdy, &c. Johnson

[1] In *The Author*, under the subject of pensioners, as well as in *The Ghost*.

praised its humour, and seemed much diverted with it. He repeated the following passage:

"In strains more exalted the salt-box shall join,
And clattering and battering and clapping combine;
With a rap and a tap while the hollow side sounds,
Up and down leaps the flap, and with rattling rebounds."[1]

I mentioned the periodical paper called "THE CONNOISSEUR." He said it wanted matter.—No doubt it had not the deep thinking of Johnson's writings. But surely it has just views of the surface of life, and in a very sprightly manner. His opinion of "THE WORLD" was not much higher than of "The Connoisseur."

Let me here apologize for the imperfect manner in which I am obliged to exhibit Johnson's conversation at this period. In the early part of my acquaintance with him, I was so rapt in admiration of his extraordinary colloquial talents, and so little accustomed to his peculiar mode of expression, that I found it extremely difficult to recollect and record his conversation with its genuine vigour and vivacity. In progress of time, when my mind was, as it were, *strongly impregnated with the Johnsonian æther*, I could with much facility and exactness, carry in my memory and commit to paper the exuberant variety of his wisdom and wit.

At this time *Miss* Williams, as she was then called, though she did not reside with him in the Temple under his roof, but had lodgings in Bolt Court, Fleet Street, had so much of his attention, that he every night drank tea

[1] In 1769 I set for Smart and Newbery, Thornton's burlesque *Ode on St. Cecilia's Day*. It was performed at Ranelagh in masks, to a very crowded audience, as I was told; for I then resided in Norfolk. Beard sung the salt-box song, which was admirably accompanied on that instrument by Brent, the fencing-master, and father of Miss Brent, the celebrated singer; Skeggs on the broom-stick, as bassoon: and a remarkable performer on the jews-harp.—"Buzzing twangs the iron lyre." Cleavers were cast in bell-metal for this entertainment. All the performers of the old woman's Oratory, employed by Foote were, I believe, employed at Ranelagh on this occasion. *Burney.*

with her before he went home, however late it might be, and she always sat up for him. This, it may be fairly conjectured, was not alone a proof of his regard for *her*, but of his own unwillingness to go into solitude, before that unseasonable hour at which he had habituated himself to expect the oblivion of repose. Dr. Goldsmith, being a privileged man, went with him this night, strutting away, and calling to me with an air of superiority, like that of an esoteric over an exoteric disciple of a sage of antiquity, "I go to Miss Williams." I confess, I then envied him this mighty privilege, of which he seemed so proud; but it was not long before I obtained the same mark of distinction.

On Tuesday the 5th of July, I again visited Johnson. He told me he had looked into the poems of a pretty voluminous writer, Mr. (now Dr.) John Ogilvie, one of the Presbyterian ministers of Scotland, which had lately come out, but could find no thinking in them. BOSWELL: "Is there not imagination in them, Sir?" JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, there is in them what *was* imagination, but it is no more imagination in *him*, than sound is sound in the echo. And his diction too is not his own. We have long ago seen *white-robed innocence*, and *flower-bespangled meads*."

Talking of London, he observed, "Sir, if you wish to have a just notion of the magnitude of this city, you must not be satisfied with seeing its great streets and squares, but must survey the innumerable little lanes and courts. It is not in the showy evolutions of buildings, but in the multiplicity of human habitations which are crowded together, that the wonderful immensity of London consists."—I have often amused myself with thinking how different a place London is to different people. They, whose narrow minds are contracted to the consideration of some one particular pursuit, view it only through that medium. A politician thinks of it merely as the seat of government in its different departments; a grazier, as a vast market for cattle; a mercantile man, as a place where a prodigious deal of business is done upon

'Change; a dramatic enthusiast, as the grand scene of theatrical entertainments; a man of pleasure, as an assemblage of taverns, and the great emporium for ladies of easy virtue. But the intellectual man is struck with it, as comprehending the whole of human life in all its variety, the contemplation of which is inexhaustible.

On Wednesday, July 6th, he was engaged to sup with me at my lodgings in Downing Street, Westminster. But on the preceding night my landlord having behaved very rudely to me and some company who were with me, I had resolved not to remain another night in his house. I was exceedingly uneasy at the awkward appearance I supposed I should make to Johnson and the other gentlemen whom I had invited, not being able to receive them at home, and being obliged to order supper at the Mitre. I went to Johnson in the morning, and talked of it as of a serious distress. He laughed, and said, "Consider, Sir, how insignificant this will appear a twelvemonth hence."—Were this consideration to be applied to most of the little vexatious incidents of life, by which our quiet is too often disturbed, it would prevent many painful sensations. I have tried it frequently with good effect. "There is nothing," continued he, "in this mighty misfortune; nay, we shall be better at the Mitre." I told him that I had been at Sir John Fielding's office,[1] complaining of my landlord, and had been informed, that though I had taken my lodgings for a year, I might, upon proof of his bad behaviour, quit them when I pleased, without being under an obligation to pay rent for any longer time than while I possessed them. The fertility of Johnson's mind could shew itself even upon so small a matter as this. "Why, Sir," said he, "I suppose this must be the law, since you have been told so in Bow Street. But, if your landlord could hold you to your bargain, and the lodgings should be yours for a year, you may certainly use them as you think fit. So, Sir, you may quarter two life-guardsmen

[1] Half-brother to Henry Fielding, and his successor in the office of Justice for Westminster.

upon him; or you may send the greatest scoundrel you can find into your apartments; or you may say that you want to make some experiments in natural philosophy, and may burn a large quantity of assafœtida in his house."

I had as my guests this evening at the Mitre tavern, Dr. Johnson, Dr. Goldsmith, Mr. Thomas Davies, Mr. Eccles, an Irish gentleman, for whose agreeable company I was obliged to Mr. Davies, and the Reverend Mr. John Ogilvie,[1] who was desirous of being in company with my illustrious friend, while I, in my turn, was proud to have the honour of shewing one of my countrymen upon what easy terms Johnson permitted me to live with him.

Goldsmith, as usual, endeavoured, with too much eagerness, to *shine*, and disputed very warmly with Johnson against the well-known maxim of the British constitution, "the King can do no wrong;" affirming, that "What was morally false could not be politically true; and as the King might, in the exercise of his regal power, command and cause the doing of what was wrong, it certainly might be said, in sense and in reason, that he could do wrong." JOHNSON: "Sir, you are to consider, that in our constitution, according to its true principles, the King is the head, he is supreme; he is above every thing, and there is no power by which he can be tried. Therefore, it is, Sir, that we hold the King can do no wrong; that whatever may happen to be wrong in government may not be above our reach, by being ascribed to Majesty. Redress is always to be had against oppression, by punishing the immediate agents. The King, though he should command, cannot force a judge to condemn a man unjustly; therefore it is the judge whom

[1] The Northern bard mentioned above. When I asked Dr. Johnson's permission to introduce him, he obligingly agreed; adding, however, with a sly pleasantry, "but he must give us none of his poetry." It is remarkable that Johnson and Churchill, however much they differed in other points, agreed on this subject. See Churchill's *Journey*. It is, however, but justice to Dr. Ogilvie to observe, that his *Day of Judgment* has no inconsiderable share of merit. B.

we prosecute and punish. Political institutions are formed upon the consideration of what will most frequently tend to the good of the whole, although now and then exceptions may occur. Thus it is better in general that a nation should have a supreme legislative power, although it may at times be abused. And then, Sir, there is this consideration, that *if the abuse be enormous, Nature will rise up, and claiming her original rights, overturn a corrupt political system.*" I mark this animated sentence with peculiar pleasure, as a noble instance of that truly dignified spirit of freedom which ever glowed in his heart, though he was charged with slavish tenets by superficial observers; because he was at all times indignant against that false patriotism, that pretended love of freedom, that unruly restlessness, which is inconsistent with the stable authority of any good government.

This generous sentiment, which he uttered with great fervour, struck me exceedingly, and stirred my blood to that pitch of fancied resistance, the possibility of which I am glad to keep in mind, but to which I trust I never shall be forced.

"Great abilities," said he, "are not requisite for an historian; for in historical composition, all the greatest powers of the human mind are quiescent. He has facts ready to his hand; so there is no exercise of invention. Imagination is not required in any high degree; only about as much as is used in the lower kinds of poetry. Some penetration, accuracy, and colouring, will fit a man for the task, if he can give the application which is necessary."

"Bayle's Dictionary is a very useful work for those to consult who love the biographical part of literature, which is what I love most."

Talking of the eminent writers in Queen Anne's reign, he observed, "I think Dr. Arbuthnot the first man among them. He was the most universal genius, being an excellent physician, a man of deep learning, and a man of much humour. Mr. Addison was, to be sure, a great man; his learning was not profound; but his morality,

his humour, and his elegance of writing, set him very high."

Mr. Ogilvie was unlucky enough to choose for the topic of his conversation the praises of his native country. He began with saying, that there was very rich land around Edinburgh. Goldsmith, who had studied physic there, contradicted this, very untruly, with a sneering laugh. Disconcerted a little by this, Mr. Ogilvie then took new ground, where, I suppose, he thought himself perfectly safe; for he observed, that Scotland had a great many noble wild prospects. JOHNSON: "I believe, Sir, you have a great many. Norway, too, has noble wild prospects; and Lapland is remarkable for prodigious noble wild prospects. But, Sir, let me tell you, the noblest prospect which a Scotchman ever sees, is the high road that leads him to England!" This unexpected and pointed sally produced a roar of applause. After all, however, those who admire the rude grandeur of Nature, cannot deny it to Caledonia.

On Saturday, July 9, I found Johnson surrounded with a numerous *levée*, but have not preserved any part of his conversation. On the 14th we had another evening by ourselves at the Mitre. It happening to be a very rainy night, I made some common-place observations on the relaxation of nerves and depression of spirits which such weather occasioned;[1] adding, however, that it was good for the vegetable creation. Johnson, who, as we have already seen, denied that the temperature of the air had any influence on the human frame, answered, with a smile of ridicule, "Why, yes, Sir, it is good for vegetables, and for the animals who eat those vegetables, and for the animals who eat those animals." This observation of his aptly enough introduced a good supper; and I soon forgot, in Johnson's company, the influence of a moist atmosphere.

[1] Johnson, says Burney, would suffer none of his friends to fill up chasms in conversation with remarks on the weather. But as the years went on he was forced at last to the confession that "I am now reduced to think, and am at least content to talk of the weather."

Feeling myself now quite at ease as his companion, though I had all possible reverence for him, I expressed a regret that I could not be so easy with my father, though he was not much older than Johnson, and certainly however respectable had not more learning and greater abilities to depress me. I asked him the reason of this. JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, I am a man of the world. I live in the world, and I take, in some degree, the colour of the world as it moves along. Your father is a judge in a remote part of the island, and all his notions are taken from the old world. Besides, Sir, there must always be a struggle between a father and son, while one aims at power and the other at independence." I said, I was afraid my father would force me to be a lawyer. JOHNSON: "Sir, you need not be afraid of his forcing you to be a laborious practising lawyer; that is not in his power. For as the proverb says, 'One man may lead a horse to the water, but twenty cannot make him drink.' He may be displeased that you are not what he wishes you to be; but that displeasure will not go far. If he insists only on your having as much law as is necessary for a man of property, and then endeavours to get you into Parliament, he is quite in the right."

He enlarged very convincingly upon the excellence of rhyme over blank verse in English poetry. I mentioned to him that Dr. Adam Smith, in his lectures upon composition, when I studied under him in the College of Glasgow, had maintained the same opinion strenuously, and I repeated some of his arguments. JOHNSON: "Sir, I was once in company with Smith, and we did not take to each other; but had I known that he loved rhyme as much as you tell me he does, I should have HUGGED him."

Talking of those who denied the truth of Christianity, he said, "It is always easy to be on the negative side. If a man were now to deny that there is salt upon the table, you could not reduce him to an absurdity. Come, let us try this a little farther. I deny that Canada is taken, and I can support my denial by pretty good arguments. The French are a much more numerous people than we; and

it is not likely that they would allow us to take it. 'But the Ministry have assured us, in all the formality of the "Gazette," that it is taken.'—Very true. But the Ministry have put us to an enormous expense by the war in America, and it is their interest to persuade us that we have got something for our money.—'But the fact is confirmed by thousands of men who were at the taking of it.'—Ay, but these men have still more interest in deceiving us. They don't want that you should think the French have beat them, but that they have beat the French. Now suppose you should go over and find that it is really taken, that would only satisfy yourself; for when you come home we will not believe you. We will say, you have been bribed.—'Yet, Sir, notwithstanding all these plausible objections, we have no doubt that Canada is really ours.' Such is the weight of common testimony. How much stronger are the evidences of the Christian religion?"

"Idleness is a disease which must be combated; but I would not advise a rigid adherence to a particular plan of study. I myself have never persisted in any plan for two days together. A man ought to read just as inclination leads him; for what he reads as a task will do him little good. A young man should read five hours in a day, and so may acquire a great deal of knowledge."

To a man of vigorous intellect and ardent curiosity like his own, reading without a regular plan may be beneficial; though even such a man must submit to it, if he would attain a full understanding of any of the sciences.

To such a degree of unrestrained frankness had he now accustomed me, that in the course of this evening I talked of the numerous reflections which had been thrown out against him on account of his having accepted a pension from his present Majesty. "Why, Sir," said he, with a hearty laugh, "it is a mighty foolish noise that they make.[1] I have accepted of a pension as a reward

[1] When I mentioned the same idle clamour to him several years afterwards, he said, with a smile, "I wish my pension were twice as large, that they might make twice as much noise." B.

which has been thought due to my literary merit; and now that I have this pension, I am the same man in every respect that I have ever been; I retain the same principles. It is true, that I cannot now curse (smiling) the House of Hanover; nor would it be decent for me to drink King James's health in the wine that King George gives me money to pay for. But, Sir, I think that the pleasure of cursing the House of Hanover, and drinking King James's health, are amply over balanced by 300*l.* a year."

There was here, most certainly, an affectation of more Jacobitism than he really had; and indeed an intention of admitting, for the moment, in a much greater extent than it really existed, the charge of disaffection imputed to him by the world, merely for the purpose of shewing how dexterously he could repel an attack, even though he were placed in the most disadvantageous position; for I have heard him declare, that if holding up his right hand would have secured victory at Culloden to Prince Charles's army, he was not sure he would have held it up; so little confidence had he in the right claimed by the House of Stuart, and so fearful was he of the consequences of another revolution on the throne of Great Britain; and Mr. Topham Beauclerk assured me, he had heard him say this before he had his pension. At another time he said to Mr. Langton, "Nothing has ever offered, that has made it worth my while to consider the question fully." He, however, also said to the same gentleman, talking of King James the Second, "It was become impossible for him to reign any longer in this country." He no doubt had an early attachment to the House of Stuart; but his zeal had cooled as his reason strengthened. Indeed I heard him once say, "that after the death of a violent Whig, with whom he used to contend with great eagerness, he felt his Toryism much abated" (*Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*). I suppose he meant Mr. Walmsley.

Yet there is no doubt that at earlier periods he was wont often to exercise both his pleasantry and ingenuity

in talking Jacobitism. My much respected friend, Dr. Douglas, now Bishop of Salisbury, has favoured me with the following admirable instance from his Lordship's own recollection. One day when dining at old Mr. Langton's, where Miss Roberts, his niece, was one of the company, Johnson, with his usual complacent attention to the fair sex, took her by the hand and said, "My dear, I hope you are a Jacobite." Old Mr. Langton, who, though a high and steady Tory, was attached to the present Royal Family, seemed offended, and asked Johnson, with great warmth, what he could mean by putting such a question to his niece? "Why, Sir," said Johnson, "I meant no offence to your niece, I meant her a great compliment. A Jacobite, Sir, believes in the divine right of Kings. He that believes in the divine right of Kings believes in a Divinity. A Jacobite believes in the divine right of Bishops. He that believes in the divine right of Bishops believes in the divine authority of the Christian religion. Therefore, Sir, a Jacobite is neither an Atheist nor a Deist. That cannot be said of a Whig; for *Whiggism is a negation of all principle.*"[1]

He advised me, when abroad, to be as much as I could with the Professors in the Universities, and with the clergy; for from their conversation I might expect the best accounts of every thing in whatever country I should be, with the additional advantage of keeping my learning alive.

It will be observed, that when giving me advice as to my travels, Dr. Johnson did not dwell upon cities, and palaces, and pictures, and shows, and Arcadian scenes. He was of Lord Essex's opinion, who advises his kinsman Roger Earl of Rutland, "rather to go a hundred miles to

[1] He used to tell, with great humour, from my relation to him, the following little story of my early years, which was literally true: "Boswell, in the year 1745, was a fine boy, wore a white cockade, and prayed for King James, till one of his uncles (General Cochran) gave him a shilling on condition that he would pray for King George, which he accordingly did. So you see (says Boswell) that *Whigs of all ages are made the same way*." B.

speak with one wise man, than five miles to see a fair town."[1]

I described to him an impudent fellow from Scotland, who affected to be a savage, and railed at all-established systems. JOHNSON: "There is nothing surprising in this, Sir. He wants to make himself conspicuous. He would tumble in a hogsty, as long as you looked at him and called to him to come out. But let him alone, never mind him, and he'll soon give it over."

I added, that the same person maintained that there was no distinction between virtue and vice. JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, if the fellow does not think as he speaks, he is lying; and I see not what honour he can propose to himself from having the character of a liar. But if he does really think that there is no distinction between virtue and vice, why, Sir, when he leaves our houses let us count our spoons."

Sir David Dalrymple, now one of the Judges of Scotland by the title of Lord Hailes, had contributed much to increase my high opinion of Johnson, on account of his writings, long before I attained to a personal acquaintance with him; I, in return, had informed Johnson of Sir David's eminent character for learning and religion; and Johnson was so much pleased, that at one of our evening meetings he gave him for his toast. I at this time kept up a very frequent correspondence with Sir David; and I read to Dr. Johnson to-night the following passage from the letter which I had last received from him:

"It gives me pleasure to think that you have obtained the friendship of Mr. Samuel Johnson. He is one of the best moral writers which England has produced. At the same time, I envy you the free and undisguised converse with such a man. May I beg you to present my best respects to him, and to assure him of the veneration which I entertain for the author of the 'Rambler'

[1] *Letter to Rutland on Travel*, 16mo. 1596. B. The letter, dated from Greenwich, January 4, 1596, was published (1613 or 1633) in a little volume called *Profitable Instructions* by "The three much admired, Robert, late Earl of Essex, Sir Philip Sidney, and Secretary Davison."

and of 'Rasselas'? Let me recommend this last work to you; with the 'Rambler' you certainly are acquainted. In 'Rasselas' you will see a tender-hearted operator, who probes the wound only to heal it. Swift, on the contrary, mangles human nature. He cuts and slashes, as if he took pleasure in the operation, like the tyrant who said, *Ita feri ut se sentiat emori.*"[1]

Johnson seemed to be much gratified by this just and well-turned compliment.

He recommended to me to keep a journal of my life, full and unreserved. He said it would be a very good exercise, and would yield me great satisfaction when the particulars were faded from my remembrance. I was uncommonly fortunate in having had a previous coincidence of opinion with him upon this subject, for I had kept such a journal for some time; and it was no small pleasure to me to have this to tell him, and to receive his approbation. He counselled me to keep it private, and said I might surely have a friend who would burn it in case of my death. From this habit I have been enabled to give the world so many anecdotes, which would otherwise have been lost to posterity. I mentioned that I was afraid I put into my journal too many little incidents. JOHNSON: "There is nothing, Sir, too little for so little a creature as man. It is by studying little things that we attain the great art of having as little misery and as much happiness as possible."

Next morning Mr. Dempster happened to call on me, and was so much struck even with the imperfect account which I gave him of Dr. Johnson's conversation, that to his honour be it recorded, when I complained that drinking port and sitting up late with him affected my nerves for some time after, he said, "One had better be palsied at eighteen than not keep company with such a man."

On Tuesday July 18, I found tall Sir Thomas Robinson sitting with Johnson.[2] Sir Thomas said, that the King of

[1] "*Ita feri ut se mori sentiat*, Strike so that he may feel himself die." A saying attributed by Suetonius to Caligula.

[2] Elder brother of the first Lord Rokeby, commonly known as *long* Sir Thomas Robinson to distinguish him from his namesake

Prussia valued himself upon three things:—upon being a hero, a musician, and an author. JOHNSON: "Pretty well, Sir, for one man. As to his being an author, I have not looked at his poetry; but his prose is poor stuff. He writes just as you would suppose Voltaire's footboy to do, who has been his amanuensis. He has such parts as the valet might have, and about as much of the colouring of the style as might be got by transcribing his works." When I was at Ferney, I repeated this to Voltaire, in order to reconcile him somewhat to Johnson, whom he, in affecting the English mode of expression, had previously characterized as "a superstitious dog;" but after hearing such a criticism on Frederick the Great, with whom he was then on bad terms, he exclaimed, "An honest fellow!"

But I think the criticism much too severe; for the "Memoirs of the House of Brandenburgh" are written as well as many works of that kind. His poetry, for the style of which he himself makes a frank apology, "*Jargonnant un François barbare*," though fraught with pernicious ravings of infidelity, has, in many places, great animation, and in some a pathetic tenderness.

Upon this contemptuous animadversion on the King of Prussia, I observed to Johnson, "It would seem then, Sir, that much less parts are necessary to make a king, than to make an author; for the King of Prussia is confessedly the greatest king now in Europe, yet you think he makes a very poor figure as an author."

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who became Lord Grantham. He was a friend of Lord Chesterfield and employed by him to mediate with Johnson. His friend made this epigram on him.

"Unlike my subject will I make my song,
It shall be witty, and it sha'n't be long."

When Sir Thomas called on him in his last illness he (who was a very short man) said, "Ah, Sir Thomas, it will be sooner over with me than it would be with you, for I am dying by inches." It was of him, when Leader of the House of Commons in 1754, that Pitt said to Fox, "The Duke [Newcastle] might as well send his jack-boot to lead us."

Mr. Levett this day shewed me Dr. Johnson's library, which was contained in two garrets over his chambers, where Lintot, son of the celebrated bookseller of that name, had formerly his warehouse. I found a number of good books, but very dusty and in great confusion. The floor was strewed with manuscript leaves, in Johnson's own hand-writing, which I beheld with a degree of veneration, supposing they perhaps might contain portions of the "Rambler," or of "Rasselas." I observed an apparatus for chemical experiments, of which Johnson was all his life very fond. The place seemed to be very favourable for retirement and meditation. Johnson told me, that he went up thither without mentioning it to his servant when he wanted to study, secure from interruption; for he would not allow his servant to say he was not at home when he really was. "A servant's strict regard for truth," said he, "must be weakened by such a practice. A philosopher may know that it is merely a form of denial; but few servants are such nice distinguishers. If I accustom a servant to tell a lie for *me*, have I not reason to apprehend that he will tell many lies for *himself?*" I am, however, satisfied that every servant of any degree of intelligence, understands saying his master is not at home, not at all as the affirmation of a fact, but as customary words, intimating that his master wishes not to be seen; so that there can be no bad effect from it.

Mr. Temple, now vicar of St. Gluvias, Cornwall, who had been my intimate friend for many years, had at this time chambers in Farrar's Buildings, at the bottom of Inner Temple Lane, which he kindly lent me upon quitting my lodgings, he being to return to Trinity Hall, Cambridge.[1] I found them particularly convenient for me, as they were so near Dr. Johnson's.

[1] Grandfather of the late Archbishop of Canterbury. See Mitford's *Life of Gray* (lxviii, *note*, Aldine ed.). His correspondence with Boswell was published by Mr. Bentley in 1857. It was discovered a few years earlier in the most extraordinary manner at a shop in Boulogne. See Napier's edition of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, i. 347, *note*.

On Wednesday, July 20, Dr. Johnson, Mr. Dempster, and my uncle Dr. Boswell, who happened to be now in London, supped with me at these chambers. JOHNSON: "Pity is not natural to man. Children are always cruel. Savages are always cruel. Pity is acquired and improved by the cultivation of reason. We may have uneasy sensations from seeing a creature in distress, without pity; for we have not pity unless we wish to relieve them. When I am on my way to dine with a friend, and finding it late, have bid the coachman make haste, if I happen to attend when he whips his horses, I may feel unpleasantly that the animals are put to pain, but I do not wish him to desist. No, Sir, I wish him to drive on."

Mr. Alexander Donaldson, bookseller of Edinburgh, had for some time opened a shop in London, and sold his cheap editions of the most popular English books, in defiance of the supposed common-law right of *Literary Property*. Johnson, though he concurred in the opinion which was afterwards sanctioned by a judgment of the House of Lords, that there was no such right, was at this time very angry that the booksellers of London, for whom he uniformly professed much regard, should suffer from an invasion of what they had ever considered to be secure; and he was loud and violent against Mr. Donaldson. "He is a fellow who takes advantage of the law to injure his brethren; for notwithstanding that the statute secures only fourteen years of exclusive right, it has always been understood by *the trade* that he who buys the copyright of a book from the author obtains a perpetual property; and upon that belief, numberless bargains are made to transfer that property after the expiration of the statutory term. Now Donaldson, I say, takes advantage here of people who have really an equitable title from usage; and if we consider how few of the books, of which they buy the property, succeed so well as to bring profit, we should be of opinion that the term of fourteen years is too short; it should be sixty years." DEMPSTER: "Donaldson, Sir, is anxious for the encouragement of literature. He reduces the price of books, so that poor

students may buy them." JOHNSON (laughing): "Well, Sir, allowing that to be his motive, he is no better than Robin Hood, who robbed the rich in order to give to the poor."

It is remarkable, that when the great question concerning Literary Property came to be ultimately tried before the supreme tribunal of this country, in consequence of the very spirited exertions of Mr. Donaldson, Dr. Johnson was zealous against a perpetuity; but he thought that the term of exclusive right of authors should be considerably enlarged. He was then for granting a hundred years.

The conversation now turned upon Mr. David Hume's style. JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, his style is not English; the structure of his sentences is French. Now the French structure and the English structure may, in the nature of things, be equally good. But if you allow that the English language is established, he is wrong. My name might originally have been Nicholson, as well as Johnson; but were you to call me Nicholson now, you would call me very absurdly."

Rousseau's treatise on the inequality of mankind was at this time a fashionable topic. It gave rise to an observation by Mr. Dempster, that the advantages of fortune and rank were nothing to a wise man, who ought to value only merit. JOHNSON: "If man were a savage, living in the woods by himself, this might be true; but in civilized society we all depend upon each other, and our happiness is very much owing to the good opinion of mankind. Now, Sir, in civilized society external advantages make us more respected. A man with a good coat upon his back meets with a better reception than he who has a bad one. Sir, you may analyze this, and say what is there in it? But that will avail you nothing, for it is a part of a general system. Pound St. Paul's church into atoms, and consider any single atom; it is, to be sure, good for nothing: but, put all these atoms together, and you have St. Paul's church. So it is with human felicity, which is made up of many ingredients, each of which may be

shewn to be very insignificant. In civilized society, personal merit will not serve you so much as money will. Sir, you may make the experiment. Go into the street, and give one man a lecture on morality, and another a shilling, and see which will respect you most. If you wish only to support nature, Sir William Petty fixes your allowance at 3*l.* a year; but as times are much altered, let us call it 6*l.* This sum will fill your belly, shelter you from the weather, and even get you a strong lasting coat, supposing it to be made of good bull's hide. Now, Sir, all beyond this is artificial, and is desired in order to obtain a greater degree of respect from our fellow-creatures. And, Sir, if 600*l.* a year procure a man more consequence, and, of course, more happiness than 6*l.* a year, the same proportion will hold as to 6000*l.* and so on, as far as opulence can be carried. Perhaps he who has a large fortune may not be so happy as he who has a small one; but that must proceed from other causes than from his having the large fortune; for, *cæteris paribus*, he who is rich in a civilized society, must be happier than he who is poor; as riches, if properly used (and it is a man's own fault if they are not), must be productive of the highest advantages. Money, to be sure, of itself is of no use; for its only use is to part with it. Rousseau, and all those who deal in paradoxes, are led away by a childish desire of novelty. When I was a boy, I used always to choose the wrong side of a debate, because most ingenious things, that is to say, most new things, could be said upon it. Sir, there is nothing for which you may not muster up more plausible arguments, than those which are urged against wealth and other external advantages. Why, now, there is stealing; why should it be thought a crime? When we consider by what unjust methods property has been often acquired, and that what was unjustly got it must be unjust to keep, where is the harm in one man's taking the property of another from him? Besides, Sir, when we consider the bad use that many people make of their property, and how much better use the thief may make of it, it may be defended as a very allowable practice. Yet, Sir,

the experience of mankind has discovered stealing to be so very bad a thing, that they make no scruple to hang a man for it. When I was running about this town a very poor fellow, I was a great arguer for the advantages of poverty; but I was, at the same time, very sorry to be poor. Sir, all the arguments which are brought to represent poverty as no evil, shew it to be evidently a great evil. You never find people labouring to convince you that you may live very happily upon a plentiful fortune.—So you hear people talking how miserable a king must be; and yet they all wish to be in his place."

It was suggested that kings must be unhappy, because they are deprived of the greatest of all satisfactions, easy and unreserved society. JOHNSON: "That is an ill-founded notion. Being a king does not exclude a man from such society. Great kings have always been social. The King of Prussia, the only great king at present, is very social. Charles the Second, the last king of England who was a man of parts, was social; and our Henries and Edwards were all social."

Mr. Dempster having endeavoured to maintain that intrinsic merit *ought* to make the only distinction amongst mankind:—JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, mankind have found that this cannot be. How shall we determine the proportion of intrinsic merit? Were that to be the only distinction amongst mankind, we should soon quarrel about the degrees of it. Were all distinctions abolished, the strongest would not long acquiesce, but would endeavour to obtain a superiority by their bodily strength. But, Sir, as subordination is very necessary for society, and contentions for superiority very dangerous, mankind, that is to say, all civilized nations, have settled it upon a plain invariable principle. A man is born to hereditary rank; or his being appointed to certain offices, gives him a certain rank. Subordination tends greatly to human happiness. Were we all upon an equality we should have no other enjoyment than mere animal pleasure."

I said, I considered distinction or rank to be of so much importance in civilized society, that if I were asked

on the same day to dine with the first duke in England, and with the first man in Britain for genius, I should hesitate which to prefer. JOHNSON: "To be sure, Sir, if you were to dine only once, and it were never to be known where you dined, you would choose rather to dine with the first man of genius; but to gain most respect, you should dine with the first duke in England. For nine people in ten that you meet with, would have a higher opinion of you for having dined with a duke; and the great genius himself would receive you better, because you had been with the great duke."

He took care to guard himself against any possible suspicion that his settled principles of reverence for rank and respect for wealth were at all owing to mean or interested motives; for he asserted his own independence as a literary man. "No man," said he, "who ever lived by literature, has lived more independently than I have done." He said he had taken longer time than he needed to have done in composing his Dictionary. He received our compliments upon that great work with complacency, and told us that the Academy *della Crusca* could scarcely believe that it was done by one man.

Next morning I found him alone, and have preserved the following fragments of his conversation. Of a gentleman who was mentioned, he said, "I have not met with any man for a long time who has given me such general displeasure. He is totally unfixed in his principles, and wants to puzzle other people." I said his principles had been poisoned by a noted infidel writer, but that he was, nevertheless, a benevolent good man.[1] JOHNSON: "We can have no dependence upon that instinctive, that constitutional goodness which is not founded upon principle. I grant you that such a man may be a very amiable member of society. I can conceive him placed in such a situation that he is not much tempted to deviate from what is right; and as every man prefers virtue, when

[1] No doubt the aforesaid Dempster. The "noted infidel writer" is of course Hume.

there is not some strong incitement to transgress its precepts, I can conceive him doing nothing wrong. But if such a man stood in need of money, I should not like to trust him; and I should certainly not trust him with young ladies, for *there* there is always temptation. Hume, and other sceptical innovators, are vain men, and will gratify themselves at any expense. Truth will not afford sufficient food to their vanity; so they have betaken themselves to error. Truth, Sir, is a cow which will yield such people no more milk, and so they are gone to milk the bull. If I could have allowed myself to gratify my vanity at the expense of truth, what fame might I have acquired. Every thing which Hume has advanced against Christianity had passed through my mind long before he wrote. Always remember this, that after a system is well settled upon positive evidence, a few partial objections ought not to shake it. The human mind is so limited, that it cannot take in all the parts of a subject, so that there may be objections raised against any thing. There are objections against a *plenum*, and objections against a *vacuum;* yet one of them must certainly be true."

I mentioned Hume's argument against the belief of miracles, that it is more probable that the witnesses to the truth of them are mistaken, or speak falsely, than that the miracles should be true. JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, the great difficulty of proving miracles should make us very cautious in believing them. But let us consider; although GOD has made Nature to operate by certain fixed laws, yet it is not unreasonable to think that he may suspend those laws, in order to establish a system highly advantageous to mankind. Now the Christian Religion is a most beneficial system, as it gives us light and certainty where we were before in darkness and doubt. The miracles which prove it are attested by men who had no interest in deceiving us; but who, on the contrary, were told that they should suffer persecution, and did actually lay down their lives in confirmation of the truth of the facts which they asserted. Indeed, for some centuries the

heathens did not pretend to deny the miracles; but said they were performed by the aid of evil spirits. This is a circumstance of great weight. Then, Sir, when we take the proofs derived from the prophecies which have been so exactly fulfilled, we have most satisfactory evidence. Supposing a miracle possible, as to which, in my opinion, there can be no doubt, we have as strong evidence for the miracles in support of Christianity as the nature of the thing admits."

At night, Mr. Johnson and I supped in a private room at the Turk's Head coffee-house, in the Strand. "I encourage this house," said he; "for the mistress of it is a good civil woman, and has not much business."

"Sir, I love the acquaintance of young people; because, in the first place, I don't like to think myself growing old. In the next place, young acquaintances must last longest, if they do last; and then, Sir, young men have more virtue than old men; they have more generous sentiments in every respect. I love the young dogs of this age, they have more wit and humour and knowledge of life than we had; but then the dogs are not so good scholars. Sir, in my early years I read very hard. It is a sad reflection, but a true one, that I knew almost as much at eighteen as I do now. My judgment, to be sure, was not so good; but I had all the facts. I remember very well, when I was at Oxford, an old gentleman said to me, 'Young man, ply your book diligently now, and acquire a stock of knowledge; for when years come unto you, you will find that poring upon books will be but an irksome task.'"

This account of his reading, given by himself in plain words, sufficiently confirms what I have already advanced upon the disputed question as to his application. It reconciles any seeming inconsistency in his way of talking upon it at different times; and shews that idleness and reading hard were with him relative terms, the import of which, as used by him, must be gathered from a comparison with what scholars of different degrees of ardour and assiduity have been known to do. And let it be

remembered, that he was now talking spontaneously, and expressing his genuine sentiments; whereas at other times he might be induced from his spirit of contradiction, or more properly from his love of argumentative contest, to speak lightly of his own application to study. It is pleasing to consider that the old gentleman's gloomy prophecy as to the irksomeness of books to men of an advanced age, which is too often fulfilled, was so far from being verified in Johnson, that his ardour for literature never failed, and his last writings had more ease and vivacity than any of his earlier productions.

He mentioned to me now, for the first time, that he had been distressed by melancholy, and for that reason had been obliged to fly from study and meditation, to the dissipating variety of life. Against melancholy he recommended constant occupation of mind, a great deal of exercise, moderation in eating and drinking, and especially to shun drinking at night. He said melancholy people were apt to fly to intemperance for relief, but that it sunk them much deeper in misery. He observed, that labouring men who work hard, and live sparingly, are seldom or never troubled with low spirits.

He again insisted on the duty of maintaining subordination of rank. "Sir, I would no more deprive a nobleman of his respect, than of his money. I consider myself as acting a part in the great system of society, and I do to others as I would have them do to me. I would behave to a nobleman as I should expect he would behave to me, were I a nobleman and he Sam. Johnson. Sir, there is one Mrs. Macaulay[1] in this town, a great republican. One day when I was at her house, I put on a very grave countenance, and said to her, 'Madam, I am now become a convert to your way of thinking. I am convinced that all mankind are upon an equal footing; and to give you an unquestionable proof, Madam, that I am in earnest, here is a very sensible, civil, well-behaved fellow-citizen,

[1] This *one* Mrs. Macaulay was the same personage who afterwards made herself so much known as "the celebrated female historian." B.

your footman; I desire that he may be allowed to sit down and dine with us.' I thus, Sir, shewed her the absurdity of the levelling doctrine. She has never liked me since. Sir, your levellers wish to level *down* as far as themselves; but they cannot bear levelling *up* to themselves. They would all have some people under them; why not then have some people above them?" I mentioned a certain author who disgusted me by his forwardness, and by shewing no deference to noblemen into whose company he was admitted. JOHNSON: "Suppose a shoemaker should claim an equality with him, as he does with a lord: how he would stare. 'Why, Sir, do you stare? (says the shoemaker;) I do great service to society. 'Tis true, I am paid for doing it; but so are you, Sir: and I am sorry to say it, better paid than I am, for doing something not so necessary. For mankind could do better without your books, than without my shoes.' Thus, Sir, there would be a perpetual struggle for precedence, were there no fixed invariable rules for the distinction of rank, which creates no jealousy, as it is allowed to be accidental."

He said, Dr. Joseph Warton was a very agreeable man, and his "Essay on the Genius and writings of Pope," a very pleasing book. I wondered that he delayed so long to give us the continuation of it. JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, I suppose he finds himself a little disappointed, in not having been able to persuade the world to be of his opinion as to Pope."

We have now been favoured with the concluding volume, in which, to use a parliamentary expression, he has *explained*, so as not to appear quite so adverse to the opinion of the world, concerning Pope, as was at first thought; and we must all agree, that his work is a most valuable accession to English literature.

A writer of deserved eminence being mentioned, Johnson said, "Why, Sir, he is a man of good parts, but being originally poor, he has got a love of mean company and low jocularity; a very bad thing, Sir. To laugh is good, as to talk is good. But you ought no more to think it enough if you laugh, than you are to think it enough if

you talk. You may laugh in as many ways as you talk; and surely *every* way of talking that is practised cannot be esteemed."[1]

I spoke of a Sir James Macdonald as a young man of most distinguished merit, who united the highest reputation at Eton and Oxford, with the patriarchal spirit of a great Highland Chieftain. I mentioned that Sir James had said to me, that he had never seen Mr. Johnson, but he had a great respect for him, though at the same time it was mixed with some degree of terror. JOHNSON: "Sir, if he were to be acquainted with me it might lessen both."[2]

The mention of this gentleman led us to talk of the Western Islands of Scotland, to visit which he expressed a wish that then appeared to me a very romantic fancy, which I little thought would be afterwards realized. He told me that his father had put Martin's account of those islands into his hands when he was very young, and that he was highly pleased with it; that he was particularly struck with the St. Kilda man's notion that the high church of Glasgow had been hollowed out of a rock; a circumstance to which old Mr. Johnson had directed his attention. He said, he would go to the Hebrides with me, when I returned from my travels, unless some very good companion should offer when I was absent, which he did not think probable; adding, "There are few people whom I take so much to as to you." And when I talked of my leaving England, he said with a very affectionate air, "My dear Boswell, I should be very unhappy at parting, did I think we were not to meet again."—I cannot too often remind my readers, that although such instances of his

[1] Croker thought that either Murphy or Warton was meant, most probably Warton, who was accused of a fondness for low company. But Warton's father was in too good a position for his son to be called "originally poor." The description would suit Murphy better; but some have fixed it on Smollett.

[2] A young Scotsman of great promise who died at Rome in 1766. All his contemporaries praise him—Horace Walpole, Hume, Adam Smith, Mrs. Carter.

kindness are doubtless very flattering to me, yet I hope my recording them will be ascribed to a better motive than to vanity; for they afford unquestionable evidence of his tenderness and complacency, which some, while they were forced to acknowledge his great powers, have been so strenuous to deny.

He maintained that a boy at school was the happiest of human beings. I supported a different opinion, from which I have never yet varied, that a man is happier: and I enlarged upon the anxiety and sufferings which are endured at school. JOHNSON: "Ah! Sir, a boy's being flogged is not so severe as a man's having the hiss of the world against him. Men have a solicitude about fame; and the greater share they have of it, the more afraid they are of losing it." I silently asked myself, "Is it possible that the great SAMUEL JOHNSON really entertains any such apprehension, and is not confident that his exalted fame is established upon a foundation never to be shaken?"

He this evening drank a bumper to Sir David Dalrymple, "as a man of worth, a scholar, and a wit." "I have," said he, "never heard of him, except from you; but let him know my opinion of him: for as he does not shew himself much in the world, he should have the praise of the few who hear of him."

On Tuesday, July 26, I found Mr. Johnson alone. It was a very wet day, and I again complained of the disagreeable effects of such weather. JOHNSON: "Sir, this is all imagination, which physicians encourage; for a man lives in air, as a fish lives in water; so that if the atmosphere press heavy from above, there is an equal resistance from below. To be sure, bad weather is hard upon people who are obliged to be abroad; and men cannot labour so well in the open air in bad weather, as in good: but, Sir, a smith or a tailor, whose work is within doors, will surely do as much in rainy weather, as in fair. Some very delicate frames, indeed, may be affected by wet weather; but not common constitutions."

We talked of the education of children; and I asked

him what he thought was best to teach them first. JOHNSON: "Sir, it is no matter what you teach them first, any more than what leg you shall put into your breeches first. Sir, you may stand disputing which is best to put in first, but in the meantime your breech is bare. Sir, while you are considering which of two things you should teach your child first, another boy has learnt them both."

On Thursday, July 28, we again supped in private at the Turk's Head coffee-house. JOHNSON: "Swift has a higher reputation than he deserves. His excellence is strong sense; for, his humour, though very well, is not remarkably good. I doubt whether the 'Tale of a Tub' be his; for he never owned it, and it is much above his usual manner."[1]

"Thomson, I think, had as much of the poet about him as most writers. Every thing appeared to him through the medium of his favourite pursuit. He could not have viewed those two candles burning but with a poetical eye."

"Has not —— a great deal of wit, Sir?"[2] JOHNSON: "I do not think so, Sir. He is, indeed, continually attempting wit, but he fails. And I have no more pleasure in hearing a man attempting wit and failing, than in seeing a man trying to leap over a ditch and tumbling into it."

He laughed heartily when I mentioned to him a saying of his concerning Mr. Thomas Sheridan, which Foote took a wicked pleasure to circulate. "Why, Sir, Sherry is dull, naturally dull; but it must have taken him a great deal of pains to become what we now see him. Such an

[1] This opinion was given by him more at large at a subsequent period. See *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, 3rd edit. p. 32. B. Yet Johnson owned in his "Life of Swift" (*Lives of the Poets*) that no other claimant could be produced, and that he did not deny it when it was made a reason to the Queen against his bishopric.

[2] Edmund Burke. Boswell records elsewhere that Langton said of Burke, "He hammered his wit upon an anvil, and the iron was cold."

excess of stupidity, Sir, is not in Nature."—"So," said he, "I allowed him all his own merit."

He now added, "Sheridan cannot bear me. I bring his declamation to a point. I ask him a plain question. 'What do you mean to teach?' Besides, Sir, what influence can Mr. Sheridan have upon the language of this great country, by his narrow exertions? Sir, it is burning a farthing candle at Dover, to shew light at Calais."

Talking of a young man[1] who was uneasy from thinking that he was very deficient in learning and knowledge, he said, "A man has no reason to complain who holds a middle place, and has many below him;—and perhaps he has not six of his years above him;—perhaps not one. Though he may not know any thing perfectly, the general mass of knowledge that he has acquired is considerable. Time will do for him all that is wanting."

The conversation then took a philosophical turn. JOHNSON: "Human experience, which is constantly contradicting theory, is the great test of truth. A system, built upon the discoveries of a great many minds, is always of more strength, than what is produced by the mere workings of any one mind, which, of itself, can do little. There is not so poor a book in the world that would not be a prodigious effort were it wrought out entirely by a single mind, without the aid of prior investigators. The French writers are superficial, because they are not scholars, and so proceed upon the mere power of their own minds; and we see how very little power they have."

"As to the Christian religion, Sir, besides the strong evidence which we have for it, there is a balance in its favour from the number of great men who have been convinced of its truth, after a serious consideration of the question. Grotius was an acute man, a lawyer, a man accustomed to examine evidence, and he was convinced. Grotius was not a recluse, but a man of the

[1] No doubt Boswell himself, who was now twenty-two.

world, who certainly had no bias to the side of religion. Sir Isaac Newton set out an infidel, and came to be a very firm believer." [1]

He this evening again recommended to me to perambulate Spain.[2] I said it would amuse him to get a letter from me dated at Salamanca. JOHNSON: "I love the University of Salamanca; for when the Spaniards were in doubt as to the lawfulness of their conquering America, the University of Salamanca gave it as their opinion that it was not lawful." He spoke this with great emotion, and with that generous warmth which dictated the lines in his "London," against Spanish encroachment.

I expressed my opinion of my friend Derrick as but a poor writer. JOHNSON: "To be sure, Sir, he is: but you are to consider that his being a literary man has got for him all that he has. It has made him King of Bath. Sir, he has nothing to say for himself but that he is a writer. Had he not been a writer he must have been sweeping the crossings in the streets, and asking halfpence from every body that passed."

In justice, however, to the memory of Mr. Derrick, who was my first tutor in the ways of London, and shewed me the town in all its variety of departments, both literary and sportive, the particulars of which Dr. Johnson advised me to put in writing, it is proper to mention what Johnson, at a subsequent period, said of him both as a writer and an editor: "Sir, I have often said, that if Derrick's letters had been written by one of a more established name, they would have been thought very pretty letters" (*Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*). And, "I sent Derrick to Dryden's relations to gather

[1] There seem to be no grounds for this opinion. All the inferences, as Croker justly says, are the other way.

[2] I fully intended to have followed advice of such weight; but having stayed much longer both in Germany and Italy than I proposed to do, and having also visited Corsica, I found that I had exceeded the time allowed me by my father, and hastened to France in my way homewards. B.

materials for his life; and I believe he got all that I myself should have got" (*Ibid.*).

Poor Derrick! I remember him with kindness. Yet I cannot withhold from my readers a pleasant humorous sally which could not have hurt him had he been alive, and now is perfectly harmless. In his collection of poems, there is one upon entering the harbour of Dublin, his native city, after a long absence. It begins thus:

> "Eblana! much lov'd city, hail!
> Where first I saw the light of day."

And after a solemn reflection on his being "numbered with forgotten dead," there is the following stanza:

> "Unless my lines protract my fame,
> And those who chance to read them, cry,
> I knew him! Derrick was his name,
> In yonder tomb his ashes lie:"

which was thus happily parodied by Mr. John Home, to whom we owe the beautiful and pathetic tragedy of "Douglas":

> "Unless my *deeds* protract my fame,
> *And he who passes sadly sings,*
> I knew him! Derrick was his name,
> *On yonder tree his carcass swings!*"

I doubt much whether the amiable and ingenious author of these burlesque lines will recollect them; for they were produced extempore one evening while he and I were walking together in the dining-room at Eglington Castle, in 1760, and I have never mentioned them to him since.

Johnson said once to me, "Sir, I honour Derrick for his presence of mind. One night, when Floyd,[1] another poor author, was wandering about the streets in the night, he found Derrick fast asleep upon a bulk; upon being suddenly waked, Derrick started up, 'My dear Floyd, I am sorry to see you in this destitute state: will you go home with me to *my lodgings?*'"

[1] He published a biographical work, containing an account of eminent writers, in 3 vols. 8vo. B.

I again begged his advice as to my method of study at Utrecht. "Come," said he, "let us make a day of it. Let us go down to Greenwich and dine, and talk of it there." The following Saturday was fixed for this excursion.

As we walked along the Strand to-night, arm in arm, a woman of the town accosted us in the usual enticing manner. "No, no, my girl," said Johnson, "it won't do." He, however, did not treat her with harshness; and we talked of the wretched life of such women, and agreed that much more misery than happiness, upon the whole, is produced by illicit commerce between the sexes.

On Saturday, July 30, Dr. Johnson and I took a sculler at the Temple-stairs, and set out for Greenwich. I asked him if he really thought a knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages an essential requisite to a good education. JOHNSON: "Most certainly, Sir; for those who know them have a very great advantage over those who do not. Nay, Sir, it is wonderful what a difference learning makes upon people even in the common intercourse of life, which does not appear to be much connected with it."—"And yet," said I, "people go through the world very well, and carry on the business of life to good advantage, without learning." JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, that may be true in cases where learning cannot possibly be of any use; for instance, this boy rows us as well without learning, as if he could sing the song of Orpheus to the Argonauts, who were the first sailors." He then called to the boy, "What would you give, my lad, to know about the Argonauts?" "Sir," said the boy, "I would give what I have." Johnson was much pleased with his answer, and we gave him a double fare. Dr. Johnson then turning to me, "Sir," said he, "a desire of knowledge is the natural feeling of mankind; and every human being, whose mind is not debauched, will be willing to give all that he has to get knowledge."

We landed at the Old Swan, and walked to Billingsgate, where we took oars and moved smoothly along the silver Thames. It was a very fine day. We were entertained

with the immense number and variety of ships that were lying at anchor, and with the beautiful country on each side of the river.

I talked of preaching, and of the great success which those called Methodists [1] have. JOHNSON: "Sir, it is owing to their expressing themselves in a plain and familiar

[1] All who are acquainted with the history of religion (the most important, surely, that concerns the human mind), know that the appellation of *Methodists* was first given to a society of students in the University of Oxford, who, about the year 1730, were distinguished by an earnest and *methodical* attention to devout exercises. This disposition of mind is not a novelty, or peculiar to any sect, but has been, and still may be found, in many Christians of every denomination. Johnson himself was, in a dignified manner, a Methodist. In his *Rambler*, No. 110, he mentions with respect "the whole discipline of regulated piety;" and in his *Prayers and Meditations*, many instances occur of his anxious examination into his spiritual state. That this religious earnestness, and in particular an observation of the influence of the Holy Spirit, has sometimes degenerated into folly, and sometimes been counterfeited for base purposes, cannot be denied. But it is not, therefore, fair to decry it when genuine. The principal argument in reason and good sense against Methodism is, that it tends to debase human nature, and prevent the generous exertions of goodness, by an unworthy supposition that GOD will pay no regard to them; although it is positively said in the Scriptures, that he "will reward every man according to his works." But I am happy to have it in my power to do justice to those, whom it is the fashion to ridicule, without any knowledge of their tenets; and this I can do by quoting a passage from one of their best apologists, Mr. Milner, who thus expresses their doctrine upon this subject: "Justified by faith, renewed in his faculties, and constrained by the love of Christ, the believer moves in the sphere of love and gratitude, and all his *duties* flow more or less from this principle. And though *they are accumulating for him in heaven a treasure of bliss proportioned to his faithfulness and activity, and it is by no means inconsistent with his principles to feel the force of this consideration*, yet love itself sweetens every duty to his mind; and he thinks there is no absurdity in his feeling the love of GOD as the grand commanding principle of his life." *Essays on several religious Subjects, &c. by Joseph Milner, A.M. Master of the Grammar School of Kingston-upon-Hull*, 1789, p. 11. B.

manner, which is the only way to do good to the common people, and which clergymen of genius and learning ought to do from a principle of duty, when it is suited to their congregation; a practice for which they will be praised by men of sense. To insist against drunkenness as a crime, because it debases reason, the noblest faculty of man, would be of no service to the common people; but to tell them that they may die in a fit of drunkenness, and shew them how dreadful that would be, cannot fail to make a deep impression. Sir, when your Scotch clergy give up their homely manner, religion will soon decay in that country." Let this observation, as Johnson meant it, be ever remembered.

I was much pleased to find myself with Johnson at Greenwich, which he celebrates in his "London" as a favourite scene. I had the poem in my pocket, and read the lines aloud with enthusiasm:

> "On Thames's banks in silent thought we stood,
> Where Greenwich smiles upon the silver flood:
> Struck with the seat which gave ELIZA birth,
> We kneel, and kiss the consecrated earth."

He remarked that the structure of Greenwich Hospital was too magnificent for a place of charity, and that its parts were too much detached to make one great whole.

Buchanan, he said, was a very fine poet; and observed, that he was the first who complimented a lady, by ascribing to her the different perfections of the heathen goddesses;[1] but that Johnstone[2] improved upon this, by making his lady, at the same time, free from their defects.

He dwelt upon Buchanan's elegant verses to Mary Queen of Scots, *Nympha Caledoniæ*, &c., and spoke with enthusiasm of the beauty of Latin verse. "All the modern languages," said he, "cannot furnish so melodious a line as

[1] Epigram. Lib. ii. *In Elizabeth. Angliæ Reg.*

[2] Arthur Johnstone (1587—1641), born near Aberdeen and died at Oxford. His principal works are a volume of Latin Epigrams and a Latin paraphrase of the Psalms.

"'Formosam resonare doces Amaryllida silvas.'"
(Virgil, *Ecl.* I. 5. B.)

Afterwards he entered upon the business of the day, which was to give me his advice as to a course of study. And here I am to mention with much regret, that my record of what he said is miserably scanty. I recollect with admiration an animating blaze of eloquence, which roused every intellectual power in me to the highest pitch, but must have dazzled me so much, that my memory could not preserve the substance of his discourse; for the note which I find of it is no more than this:—"He ran over the grand scale of human knowledge; advised me to select some particular branch to excel in, but to acquire a little of every kind." The defect of my minutes will be fully supplied by a long letter upon the subject, which he favoured me with, after I had been some time at Utrecht, and which my readers will have the pleasure to peruse in its proper place.

We walked in the evening in Greenwich Park. He asked me, I suppose, by way of trying my disposition, "Is not this very fine?" Having no exquisite relish of the beauties of Nature, and being more delighted with "the busy hum of men," I answered, "Yes, Sir; but not equal to Fleet-street." JOHNSON: "You are right, Sir."

I am aware that many of my readers may censure my want of taste. Let me, however, shelter myself under the authority of a very fashionable baronet[1] in the brilliant world, who, on his attention being called to the fragrance of a May evening in the country, observed, "This may be very well; but for my part, I prefer the smell of a flambeau at the playhouse."

[1] My friend Sir Michael le Fleming. This gentleman, with all his experience of sprightly and elegant life, inherits, with the beautiful family domain, no inconsiderable share of that love of literature which distinguished his venerable grandfather, the Bishop of Carlisle. He one day observed to me, of Dr. Johnson, in a felicity of phrase, "There is a blunt dignity about him on every occasion." B.

We stayed so long at Greenwich, that our sail up the river, in our return to London, was by no means so pleasant as in the morning; for the night air was so cold that it made me shiver. I was the more sensible of it from having sat up all the night before recollecting and writing in my Journal what I thought worthy of preservation; an exertion, which, during the first part of my acquaintance with Johnson, I frequently made. I remember having set up four nights in one week, without being much incommoded in the day time.

Johnson, whose robust frame was not in the least affected by the cold, scolded me, as if my shivering had been a paltry effeminacy, saying, "Why do you shiver?" Sir William Scott [afterwards Lord Stowell], of the Commons, told me, that when he complained of a headache in the post-chaise, as they were travelling together to Scotland, Johnson treated him in the same manner: "At your age, Sir, I had no headache." It is not easy to make allowance for sensations in others, which we ourselves have not at the time. We must all have experienced how very differently we are affected by the complaints of our neighbours, when we are well and when we are ill. In full health, we can scarcely believe that they suffer much; so faint is the image of pain upon our imagination: when softened by sickness, we readily sympathize with the sufferings of others.

We concluded the day at the Turk's Head coffee-house very socially. He was pleased to listen to a particular account which I gave him of my family, and of its hereditary estate, as to the extent and population of which he asked questions, and made calculations; recommending, at the same time, a liberal kindness to the tenantry, as people over whom the proprietor was placed by Providence. He took delight in hearing my description of the romantic seat of my ancestors. "I must be there, Sir," said he, "and we will live in the old castle; and if there is not room in it remaining, we will build one." I was highly flattered, but could scarcely indulge a hope that Auchinleck would indeed be honoured by his

presence, and celebrated by a description, as it afterwards was, in his "Journey to the Western Islands."

After he had again talked of my setting out for Holland, he said, "I must see thee out of England; I will accompany you to Harwich." I could not find words to express what I felt upon this unexpected and very great mark of his affectionate regard.

Next day, Sunday, July 31, I told him I had been that morning at a meeting of the people called Quakers, where I had heard a woman preach. JOHNSON: "Sir, a woman's preaching is like a dog's walking on his hind legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all."

On Tuesday, August 2 (the day of my departure from London having been fixed for the 5th), Dr. Johnson did me the honour to pass a part of the morning with me at my chambers. He said that, "he always felt an inclination to do nothing." I observed, that it was strange to think that the most indolent man in Britain had written the most laborious work, THE ENGLISH DICTIONARY.

I mentioned an imprudent publication, by a certain friend of his, at an early period of life, and asked him if he thought it would hurt him. JOHNSON: "No, Sir, not much. It may, perhaps, be mentioned at an election."[1]

I had now made good my title to be a privileged man, and was carried by him in the evening to drink tea with Miss Williams, whom, though under the misfortune of having lost her sight, I found to be agreeable in conversation; for she had a variety of literature, and expressed herself well: but her peculiar value was the intimacy in which she had long lived with Johnson, by which she was

[1] Probably Burke's *Vindication of Natural Society* (published in 1756 when the writer was twenty-six), written in imitation of Bolingbroke's style and principles, and for some time believed by many to be his genuine work, by others to be the work of a genuine disciple. In 1765 Burke republished it with a preface explaining his design.

acquainted with his habits, and knew how to lead him on to talk.

After tea he carried me to what he called his walk, which was a long narrow paved court in the neighbourhood, overshadowed by some trees. There we sauntered a considerable time; and I complained to him that my love of London and of his company was such, that I shrunk almost from the thought of going away even to travel, which is generally so much desired by young men. He roused me by manly and spirited conversation. He advised me, when settled in any place abroad, to study with an eagerness after knowledge, and to apply to Greek an hour every day; and when I was moving about, to read diligently the great book of mankind.

On Wednesday, August 3, we had our last social evening at the Turk's Head coffee-house, before my setting out for foreign parts. I had the misfortune, before we parted, to irritate him unintentionally. I mentioned to him how common it was in the world to tell absurd stories of him, and to ascribe to him very strange sayings. JOHNSON: "What do they make me say, Sir?" BOSWELL: "Why, Sir, as an instance very strange indeed (laughing heartily as I spoke), David Hume told me, you said that you would stand before a battery of cannon to restore the Convocation to its full powers."—Little did I apprehend that he had actually said this: but I was soon convinced of my error; for, with a determined look, he thundered out "And would I not, Sir? Shall the Presbyterian *Kirk* of Scotland have its General Assembly, and the Church of England be denied its Convocation?" He was walking up and down the room, while I told him the anecdote; but when he uttered this explosion of High Church zeal, he had come close to my chair, and his eyes flashed with indignation. I bowed to the storm, and diverted the force of it, by leading him to expatiate on the influence which religion derived from maintaining the church with great external respectability.

I must not omit to mention that he this year wrote "The Life of Ascham,"† and the Dedication to the Earl

of Shaftesbury,† prefixed to the edition of that writer's English works, published by Mr. Bennet.[1]

On Friday, August 5, we set out early in the morning in the Harwich stage-coach. A fat, elderly gentlewoman, and a young Dutchman, seemed the most inclined among us to conversation. At the inn where we dined, the gentlewoman said that she had done her best to educate her children; and, particularly, that she had never suffered them to be a moment idle. JOHNSON: "I wish, Madam, you would educate me too: for I have been an idle fellow all my life." "I am sure, Sir," said she, "you have not been idle." JOHNSON: "Nay, Madam, it is very true; and that gentleman there," pointing to me, "has been idle. He was idle at Edinburgh. His father sent him to Glasgow, where he continued to be idle. He then came to London where he has been very idle; and now he is going to Utrecht, where he will be as idle as ever." I asked him privately how he could expose me so. JOHNSON: "Poh, poh!" said he, "they knew nothing about you, and will think of it no more." In the afternoon the gentlewoman talked violently against the Roman Catholics, and of the horrors of the Inquisition. To the utter astonishment of all the passengers but myself, who knew that he could talk upon any side of a question, he defended the Inquisition, and maintained, that "False doctrine should be checked on its first appearance; that the Civil Power should unite with the Church in punishing those who dared to attack the established religion, and that such only were punished by the Inquisition." He had in his pocket "Pomponius Mela de Situ Orbis," in which he read occasionally, and seemed very intent upon ancient geography. Though by no means niggardly, his attention to what was generally right was so minute, that having observed at one of the stages that I ostentatiously gave a shilling to the coachman, when the custom was for each passenger to give only sixpence, he took me aside

[1] According to Davies, the publisher, Johnson was the real editor, not Bennet.

and scolded me, saying that what I had done would make the coachman dissatisfied with all the rest of the passengers, who gave him no more than his due. This was a just reprimand; for in whatever way a man may indulge his generosity or his vanity in spending his money, for the sake of others he ought not to raise the price of any article for which there is a constant demand.

He talked of Mr. Blacklock's poetry, so far as it was descriptive of visible objects; and observed, that "As its author had the misfortune to be blind, we may be absolutely sure that such passages are combinations of what he has remembered of the works of other writers who could see.[1] That foolish fellow, Spence, has laboured to explain philosophically how Blacklock may have done, by means of his own faculties, what it is impossible he should do. The solution, as I have given it, is plain. Suppose, I know a man to be so lame that he is absolutely incapable to move himself, and I find him in a different room from that in which I left him; shall I puzzle myself with idle conjectures, that, perhaps, his nerves have by some unknown change all at once become effective? No, Sir, it is clear how he got into a different room: he was *carried*."

Having stopped a night at Colchester, Johnson talked of that town with veneration, for having stood a siege for Charles the First. The Dutchman alone now remained with us. He spoke English tolerably well; and thinking to recommend himself to us by expatiating on the superiority of the criminal jurisprudence of this country over that of Holland, he inveighed against the barbarity of putting an accused person to the torture, in order to force a confession. But Johnson was as ready for this as for the Inquisition. "Why, Sir, you do not, I find, understand the law of your own country. To torture in Holland is considered as a favour to an accused person; for no man is put to the torture there, unless there is as much evidence against him as would amount to conviction in

[1] Dr. Thomas Blacklock (1721–91) lost his sight from smallpox at the age of six.

England. An accused person among you, therefore, has one chance more to escape punishment than those who are tried among us."

At supper this night he talked of good eating with uncommon satisfaction. "Some people," said he, "have a foolish way of not minding, or pretending not to mind, what they eat. For my part, I mind my belly very studiously, and very carefully; for I look upon it, that he who does not mind his belly will hardly mind any thing else." He now appeared to me *Jean Bull philosophe*, and he was for the moment, not only serious but vehement. Yet I have heard him, upon other occasions, talk with great contempt of people who were anxious to gratify their palates; and the 206th number of his "Rambler" is a masterly essay against gulosity. His practice, indeed, I must acknowledge, may be considered as casting the balance of his different opinions upon this subject; for I never knew any man who relished good eating more than he did. When at table, he was totally absorbed in the business of the moment; his looks seemed riveted to his plate; nor would he, unless when in very high company, say one word, or even pay the least attention to what was said by others, till he had satisfied his appetite; which was so fierce, and indulged with such intenseness, that while in the act of eating, the veins of his forehead swelled, and generally a strong perspiration was visible. To those whose sensations were delicate, this could not but be disgusting; and it was doubtless not very suitable to the character of a philosopher, who should be distinguished by self-command. But it must be owned, that Johnson, though he could be rigidly *abstemious*, was not a *temperate* man either in eating or drinking. He could refrain, but he could not use moderately. He told me, that he had fasted two days without inconvenience, and that he had never been hungry but once. They who beheld with wonder how much he eat upon all occasions when his dinner was to his taste, could not easily conceive what he must have meant by hunger; and not only was he remarkable for the extraordinary quantity which he eat,

but he was, or affected to be, a man of very nice discernment in the science of cookery. He used to descant critically on the dishes which had been at table where he had dined or supped, and to recollect very minutely what he had liked. I remember when he was in Scotland, his praising "*Gordon's palates*" (a dish of palates at the Honourable Alexander Gordon's) with a warmth of expression which might have done honour to more important subjects. "As for Maclaurin's imitation of a *made dish*, it was a wretched attempt." He about the same time was so much displeased with the performance of a nobleman's French cook, that he exclaimed with vehemence, "I'd throw such a rascal into the river;" and he then proceeded to alarm a lady at whose house he was to sup, by the following manifesto of his skill: "I, Madam, who live at a variety of good tables, am a much better judge of cookery, than any person who has a very tolerable cook, but lives much at home; for his palate is gradually adapted to the taste of his cook; whereas, Madam, in trying by a wider range, I can more exquisitely judge." When invited to dine, even with an intimate friend, he was not pleased if something better than a plain dinner was not prepared for him. I have heard him say on such an occasion, "This was a good dinner enough, to be sure; but it was not a dinner to *ask* a man to." On the other hand, he was wont to express, with great glee, his satisfaction when he had been entertained quite to his mind. One day when he had dined with his neighbour and landlord in Bolt Court, Mr. Allen, the printer, whose old housekeeper had studied his taste in every thing, he pronounced this eulogy; "Sir, we could not have had a better dinner had there been a *Synod of Cooks*."[1]

While we were left by ourselves, after the Dutchman had gone to bed, Dr. Johnson talked of that studied

[1] According to Mrs. Piozzi's *Anecdotes*, Johnson's own tastes were not very delicate: "A leg of pork boiled till it dropped from the bone, a veal-pie with plums and sugar, or the outside cut of a salt buttock of beef, were his favourite dainties."

behaviour which many have recommended and practised. He disapproved of it: and said, "I never considered whether I should be a grave man, or a merry man, but just let inclination, for the time, have its course."

He flattered me with some hopes that he would, in the course of the following summer, come over to Holland, and accompany me in a tour through the Netherlands.

I teased him with fanciful apprehensions of unhappiness. A moth having fluttered round the candle, and burnt itself, he laid hold of this little incident to admonish me; saying, with a sly look, and in a solemn but a quiet tone, "That creature was its own tormentor, and I believe its name was BOSWELL."

Next day we got to Harwich to dinner; and my passage in the packet-boat to Helvoetsluys being secured, and my baggage put on board, we dined at our inn by ourselves. I happened to say it would be terrible if he should not find a speedy opportunity of returning to London, and be confined in so dull a place. JOHNSON: "Don't, Sir, accustom yourself to use big words for little matters. It would *not* be *terrible*, though I *were* to be detained some time here." The practice of using words of disproportionate magnitude, is, no doubt, too frequent everywhere; but I think most remarkable among the French, of which, all who have travelled in France must have been struck with innumerable instances.

We went and looked at the church, and having gone into it and walked up to the altar, Johnson, whose piety was constant and fervent, sent me to my knees, saying, "Now that you are going to leave your native country, recommend yourself to the protection of your CREATOR and REDEEMER."

After we came out of the church, we stood talking for some time together of Bishop Berkeley's ingenious sophistry to prove the non-existence of matter, and that every thing in the universe is merely ideal. I observed, that though we are satisfied his doctrine is not true, it is impossible to refute it. I never shall forget the alacrity with which Johnson answered, striking his foot with

mighty force against a large stone, till he rebounded from it, "I refute it *thus*." This was a stout exemplification of the *first truths* of *Père Bouffier*,[1] or the *original principles* of Reid and of Beattie; without admitting which, we can no more argue in metaphysics, than we can argue in mathematics without axioms. To me it is not conceivable how Berkeley can be answered by pure reasoning; but I know that the nice and difficult task was to have been undertaken by one of the most luminous minds of the present age had not politics "turned him from calm philosophy aside." What an admirable display of subtilty, united with brilliance, might his contending with Berkeley have afforded us! How must we, when we reflect on the loss of such an intellectual feast, regret that he should be characterized as the man,

> "Who born for the universe narrow'd his mind,
> And to party gave up what was meant for mankind!"

My revered friend walked down with me to the beach, where we embraced and parted with tenderness, and engaged to correspond by letters. I said, "I hope, Sir, you will not forget me in my absence." JOHNSON: "Nay, Sir, it is more likely you should forget me, than that I should forget you." As the vessel put out to sea, I kept my eyes upon him for a considerable time, while he remained rolling his majestic frame in his usual manner; and at last I perceived him walk back into the town, and he disappeared.

Utrecht seeming at first very dull to me, after the animated scenes of London, my spirits were grievously affected; and I wrote to Johnson a plaintive and desponding letter to which he paid no regard. Afterwards, when I had acquired a firmer tone of mind, I wrote him

[1] Claude Bouffier (1661—1737) was born in Poland of French parents. He was brought when young to France and naturalized there. At the age of nineteen he became a member of the Society of Jesus, and passed the rest of his life in their college at Paris. His chief work was *Traité des Premières Vérités et de la Source de nos Jugements.*

a second letter, expressing much anxiety to hear from him. At length I received the following epistle, which was of important service to me, and, I trust, will be so to many others.

À Mr. Mr. Boswell, *à la Cour de l'Empereur, Utrecht.*

"Dear Sir,

"You are not to think yourself forgotten, or criminally neglected, that you have had yet no letter from me. I love to see my friends, to hear from them, to talk to them, and to talk of them; but it is not without a considerable effort of resolution that I prevail upon myself to write. I would not, however, gratify my own indolence by the omission of any important duty, or any office of real kindness.

"To tell you that I am or am not well, that I have or have not been in the country, that I drank your health in the room in which we last sat together, and that your acquaintance continue to speak of you with their former kindness, topics with which those letters are commonly filled which are written only for the sake of writing, I seldom shall think worth communicating; but if I can have it in my power to calm any harassing disquiet, to excite any virtuous desire, to rectify any important opinion, or fortify any generous resolution, you need not doubt but I shall at least wish to prefer the pleasure of gratifying a friend much less esteemed than yourself, before the gloomy calm of idle vacancy. Whether I shall easily arrive at an exact punctuality of correspondence, I cannot tell. I shall, at present, expect that you will receive this in return for two which I have had from you. The first, indeed, gave me an account so hopeless of the state of your mind, that it hardly admitted or deserved an answer; by the second I was much better pleased; and the pleasure will still be increased by such a narrative of the progress of your studies, as may evince the continuance of an equal and rational application of your mind to some useful inquiry.

"You will, perhaps, wish to ask, what study I would recommend. I shall not speak of theology, because it ought not to be considered as a question whether you shall endeavour to know the will of God.

"I shall, therefore, consider only such studies as we are at liberty to pursue or to neglect; and of these I know not how you will make a better choice, than by studying the civil law as your father advises, and the ancient languages, as you had determined for yourself; at least resolve, while you remain, in any settled

residence, to spend a certain number of hours every day amongst your books. The dissipation of thought of which you complain, is nothing more than the vacillation of a mind suspended between different motives, and changing its direction as any motive gains or loses strength. If you can but kindle in your mind any strong desire, if you can but keep predominant any wish for some particular excellence or attainment, the gusts of imagination will break away, without any effect upon your conduct, and commonly without any traces left upon the memory.

"There lurks, perhaps, in every human heart a desire of distinction, which inclines every man first to hope, and then to believe, that Nature has given him something peculiar to himself. This vanity makes one mind nurse aversion, and another actuate desires, till they rise by art much above their original state of power; and as affectation in time improves to habit, they at last tyrannize over him who at first encouraged them only for show. Every desire is a viper in the bosom, who, while he was chill, was harmless; but when warmth gave him strength, exerted it in poison. You know a gentleman [Boswell himself], who, when first he set his foot in the gay world, as he prepared himself to whirl in the vortex of pleasure, imagined a total indifference and universal negligence to be the most agreeable concomitants of youth, and the strongest indication of an airy temper and a quick apprehension. Vacant to every object, and sensible of every impulse, he thought that all appearance of diligence would deduct something from the reputation of genius; and hoped that he should appear to attain, amidst all the ease of carelessness, and all the tumult of diversion, that knowledge and those accomplishments which mortals of the common fabric obtain only by mute abstraction and solitary drudgery. He tried this scheme of life awhile, was made weary of it by his sense and his virtue; he then wished to return to his studies; and finding long habits of idleness and pleasure harder to be cured than he expected, still willing to retain his claim to some extraordinary prerogatives, resolved the common consequences of irregularity into an unalterable decree of destiny, and concluded that Nature had originally formed him incapable of rational employment.

"Let all such fancies, illusive and destructive, be banished henceforward from your thoughts for ever. Resolve, and keep your resolution; choose, and pursue your choice. If you spend this day in study, you will find yourself still more able to study to-morrow; not that you are to expect that you shall at once obtain a complete victory. Depravity is not very easily overcome. Resolution will sometimes relax, and diligence will sometimes be interrupted; but let no accidental surprise or

deviation, whether short or long, dispose you to despondency. Consider these failings as incident to all mankind. Begin again where you left off, and endeavour to avoid the seducements that prevailed over you before.

"This, my dear Boswell, is advice which, perhaps, has been often given you, and given you without effect. But this advice, if you will not take from others, you must take from your own reflections, if you purpose to do the duties of the station to which the bounty of Providence has called you.

"Let me have a long letter from you as soon as you can. I hope you continue your journal, and enrich it with many observations upon the country in which you reside. It will be a favour if you can get me any books in the Frisick language, and can inquire how the poor are maintained in the Seven Provinces. I am, dear Sir, your most affectionate servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"London, Dec. 8, 1763."

I am sorry to observe, that neither in my own minutes, nor in my letters to Johnson which have been preserved by him, can I find any information how the poor are maintained in the Seven Provinces. But I shall extract from one of my letters what I learnt concerning the other subject of his curiosity.

"I have made all possible inquiry with respect to the Frisick language, and find that it has been less cultivated than any other of the northern dialects; a certain proof of which is their deficiency of books. Of the old Frisick there are no remains, except some ancient laws preserved by *Schotanus* in his 'Beschryvinge van die Heerlykheid van Friesland;' and his 'Historia Frisica.' I have not yet been able to find these books. Professor Trotz, who formerly was of the University of Vranyken in Friesland, and is at present preparing an edition of all the Frisick laws, gave me this information. Of the modern Frisick, or what is spoken by the boors of this day, I have procured a specimen. It is 'Gisbert Japix's Rymelerie,' which is the only book that they have. It is amazing that they have no translation of the Bible, no treatises of devotion, nor even any of the ballads and story-books which are so agreeable to country people. You shall have 'Japix' by the first convenient opportunity. I doubt not to pick up *Schotanus*. Mynheer Trotz has promised me his assistance."

Early in 1764, Johnson paid a visit to the Langton

family, at their seat of Langton in Lincolnshire, where he passed some time much to his satisfaction. His friend Bennet Langton, it will not be doubted, did every thing in his power to make the place agreeable to so illustrious a guest: and the elder Mr. Langton and his lady, being fully capable of understanding his value, were not wanting in attention. He, however, told me, that old Mr. Langton, though a man of considerable learning, had so little allowance to make for his occasional "laxity of talk," that because in the course of discussion he sometimes mentioned what might be said in favour of the peculiar tenets of the Romish Church, he went to his grave believing him to be of that communion.

Johnson, during his stay at Langton, had the advantage of a good library, and saw several gentlemen of the neighbourhood. I have obtained from Mr. Langton the following particulars of this period.

He was now fully convinced that he could not have been satisfied with a country living; for talking of a respectable clergyman in Lincolnshire, he observed, "This man, Sir, fills up the duties of his life well. I approve or him, but could not imitate him."

To a lady who endeavoured to vindicate herself from blame for neglecting social attention to worthy neighbours, by saying "I would go to them if it would do them any good;" he said, "What good, Madam, do you expect to have in your power to do them? It is shewing them respect, and that is doing them good."

So socially accommodating was he, that once when Mr. Langton and he were driving together in a coach, and Mr. Langton complained of being sick, he insisted that they should go out, and sit on the back of it in the open air, which they did. And being sensible how strange the appearance must be, observed, that a countryman whom they saw in a field would probably be thinking, "If these two madmen should come down, what would become of me?"

Soon after his return to London, which was in February, was founded that CLUB which existed long without a

name, but at Mr. Garrick's funeral became distinguished by the title of THE LITERARY CLUB. Sir Joshua Reynolds had the merit of being the first proposer of it, to which Johnson acceded, and the original members were, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Dr. Johnson, Mr. Edmund Burke, Dr. Nugent, Mr. Beauclerk, Mr. Langton, Dr. Goldsmith, Mr. Chamier, and Sir John Hawkins. They met at the Turk's Head, in Gerrard Street, Soho, one evening in every week, at seven, and generally continued their conversation till a pretty late hour. This club has been gradually increased to its present number, thirty-five. After about ten years, instead of supping weekly, it was resolved to dine together once a fortnight during the meeting of Parliament. Their original tavern having been converted into a private house, they moved first to Prince's in Sackville Street, then to Le Telier's in Dover Street, and now meet at Parsloe's, St. James' Street. Between the time of its formation, and the time at which this work is passing through the press (June 1792) [*i. e.* the second edition], the following persons, now dead, were members of it: Mr. Dunning (afterwards Lord Ashburton), Mr. Samuel Dyer, Mr. Garrick, Dr. Shipley Bishop of St. Asaph, Mr. Vesey, Mr. Thomas Warton, and Dr. Adam Smith. The present members are, Mr. Burke, Mr. Langton, Lord Charlemont, Sir Robert Chambers, Dr. Percy Bishop of Dromore, Dr. Barnard Bishop of Killaloe, Dr. Marlay Bishop of Clonfert, Mr. Fox, Dr. George Fordyce, Sir William Scott, Sir Joseph Banks, Sir Charles Bunbury, Mr. Windham of Norfolk, Mr. Sheridan, Mr. Gibbon, Sir William Jones, Mr. Colman, Mr. Steevens, Dr. Burney, Dr. Joseph Warton, Mr. Malone, Lord Ossory, Lord Spencer, Lord Lucan, Lord Palmerston, Lord Eliot, Lord Macartney, Mr. Richard Burke, junior, Sir William Hamilton, Dr. Warren, Mr. Courtenay, Dr. Hinchliffe Bishop of Peterborough, the Duke of Leeds, Dr. Douglas Bishop of Salisbury, and the writer of this account.[1]

[1] The Club still flourishes, and celebrated its centenary by a dinner at the Clarendon Hotel in 1864. Its numbers were gradually

Sir John Hawkins (*Life of Johnson*, p. 425) represents himself as a "*seceder*" from this society, and assigns as the reason of his "*withdrawing*" himself from it, that its late hours were inconsistent with his domestic arrangements. In this he is not accurate; for the fact was, that he one evening attacked Mr. Burke in so rude a manner, that all the company testified their displeasure; and at their next meeting his reception was such that he never came again.[1]

He is equally inaccurate with respect to Mr. Garrick, of whom he says, "He trusted that the least intimation of a desire to come among us, would procure him a ready admission; but in this he was mistaken. Johnson consulted me upon it; and when I could find no objection to receiving him, exclaimed,—'He will disturb us by his buffoonery;'—and afterwards so managed matters, that he was never formally proposed, and, by consequence, never admitted" (*Life of Johnson*, p. 425).

In justice both to Mr. Garrick and Dr. Johnson, I think it necessary to rectify this mis-statement. The truth is, that not very long after the institution of our club, Sir Joshua Reynolds was speaking of it to Garrick. "I like it much," said he, "I think I shall be of you." When Sir Joshua mentioned this to Dr. Johnson, he was much displeased with the actor's conceit. "*He'll be of us*," said Johnson, "how does he know we will *permit* him? the first duke in England has no right to hold such language." However, when Garrick was regularly proposed some time

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increased till in 1798 they were fixed at forty. Sir Walter Scott was a member, and also Macaulay. In the latter's journal and letters there are many allusions to its pleasant dinners. "I was amused," he writes on his first introduction to it, "in turning over the records of the Club to come upon poor Bozzy's signature, evidently affixed when he was too drunk to guide his pen." See Sir George Trevelyan's *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*.

[1] From Sir Joshua Reynolds. B. Burney records that, Hawkins having refused to pay his portion of the reckoning for the supper, because he usually eat no supper at home, Johnson observed, "Sir John, Sir, is a very *unclubable* man."

afterwards, Johnson, though he had taken momentary offence at his arrogance, warmly and kindly supported him, and he was accordingly elected, was a most agreeable member, and continued to attend our meetings to the time of his death.

Mrs. Piozzi (*Letters to and from Dr. Johnson*, ii. 278) has also given a similar misrepresentation of Johnson's treatment of Garrick in this particular, as if he had used these contemptuous expressions: "If Garrick *does* apply, I'll black-ball him.—Surely, one ought to sit in a society like ours,

'Unelbow'd by a gamester, pimp, or player.'"

I am happy to be enabled by such unquestionable authority as that of Sir Joshua Reynolds, as well as from my own knowledge, to vindicate at once the heart of Johnson and the social merit of Garrick.

In this year, except what he may have done in revising "Shakespeare," we do not find that he laboured much in literature. He wrote a review of Grainger's "Sugar Cane," a poem, in the "London Chronicle." He told me, that Dr. Percy wrote the greatest part of this review; but, I imagine, he did not recollect it distinctly, for it appears to be mostly, if not altogether, his own. He also wrote in the "Critical Review," an account † of Goldsmith's excellent poem, "The Traveller."

The ease and independence to which he had at last attained by royal munificence, increased his natural indolence. In his "Meditations" (p. 53), he thus accuses himself: "Good Friday, April 20, 1764. I have made no reformation; I have lived totally useless, more sensual in thought, and more addicted to wine and meat" (*Pr. and Med.* p. 58). And next morning he thus feelingly complains:

"My indolence, since my last reception of the sacrament, has sunk into grosser sluggishness, and my dissipation spread into wilder negligence. My thoughts have been clouded with sensuality: and, except that from the beginning of this year I have, in some measure forborne excess of strong drink, my appetites have

predominated over my reason. A kind of strange oblivion has overspread me, so that I know not what has become of the last year; and perceive that incidents and intelligence pass over me without leaving any impression."

He then solemnly says, "This is not the life to which heaven is promised" (*Ibid.* p. 51); and he earnestly resolves an amendment.

It was his custom to observe certain days with a pious abstraction; viz. New-year's-day, the day of his wife's death, Good Friday, Easter-day, and his own birth-day. He this year says: "I have now spent fifty-five years in resolving; having, from the earliest time almost that I can remember, been forming schemes of a better life. I have done nothing. The need of doing, therefore, is pressing, since the time of doing is short. O God, grant me to resolve aright, and to keep my resolutions, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen" (*Pr. and Med.* p. 58). Such a tenderness of conscience, such a fervent desire of improvement, will rarely be found. It is, surely, not decent in those who are hardened in indifference to spiritual improvement, to treat this pious anxiety of Johnson with contempt.

About this time he was afflicted with a very severe return of the hypochondriac disorder, which was ever lurking about him. He was so ill, as, notwithstanding his remarkable love of company, to be entirely averse to society, the most fatal symptom of that malady. Dr. Adams told me, that, as an old friend he was admitted to visit him, and that he found him in a deplorable state, sighing, groaning, talking to himself, and restlessly walking from room to room. He then used this emphatical expression of the misery which he felt: "I would consent to have a limb amputated to recover my spirits."

Talking to himself was, indeed, one of his singularities ever since I knew him. I was certain that he was frequently uttering pious ejaculations; for fragments of the Lord's Prayer have been distinctly overheard. His friend Mr. Thomas Davies, of whom Churchill says,

"That Davies hath a very pretty wife:"

when Dr. Johnson muttered "Lead us not into temptation;" used with waggish and gallant humour to whisper Mrs. Davies, "You, my dear, are the cause of this."

He had another particularity, of which none of his friends even ventured to ask an explanation. It appeared to me some superstitious habit, which he had contracted early, and from which he had never called upon his reason to disentangle him. This was his anxious care to go out or in at a door or passage, by a certain number of steps from a certain point, or at least so as that either his right or his left foot (I am not certain which) should constantly make the first actual movement when he came close to the door or passage. Thus I conjecture: for I have, upon innumerable occasions, observed him suddenly stop, and then seem to count his steps with a deep earnestness; and when he had neglected or gone wrong in this sort of magical movement, I have seen him go back again, put himself in a proper posture to begin the ceremony, and, having gone through it, break from his abstraction, walk briskly on, and join his companion. A strange instance of something of this nature, even when on horseback, happened when he was in the isle of Sky (*Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*). Sir Joshua Reynolds has observed him to go a good way about, rather than cross a particular alley in Leicester-fields; but this Sir Joshua imputed to his having had some disagreeable recollection associated with it.

That the most minute singularities which belonged to him, and made very observable parts of his appearance and manner, may not be omitted, it is requisite to mention, that while talking or even musing as he sat in his chair, he commonly held his head to one side towards his right shoulder, and shook it in a tremulous manner, moving his body backwards and forwards, and rubbing his left knee in the same direction, with the palm of his hand. In the intervals of articulating he made various sounds with his mouth, sometimes as if ruminating, or what is called

chewing the cud, sometimes giving half a whistle, sometimes making his tongue play backwards from the roof of his mouth, as if clucking like a hen, and sometimes protruding it against his upper gums in front, as if pronouncing quickly under his breath, *too*, *too*, *too*: all this accompanied sometimes with a thoughtful look, but more frequently with a smile. Generally when he had concluded a period, in the course of a dispute, by which time he was a good deal exhausted by violence and vociferation, he used to blow out his breath like a whale. This I suppose was a relief to his lungs; and seemed in him to be a contemptuous mode of expression, as if he had made the arguments of his opponent fly like chaff before the wind.

I am fully aware how very obvious an occasion I here give for the sneering jocularity of such as have no relish of an exact likeness; which to render complete, he who draws it must not disdain the slightest strokes. But if witlings should be inclined to attack this account, let them have the candour to quote what I have offered in my defence.

He was for some time in the summer at Easton Maudit, Northamptonshire, on a visit to the Reverend Dr. Percy, now Bishop of Dromore. Whatever dissatisfaction he felt at what he considered as a slow progress in intellectual improvement, we find that his heart was tender, and his affections warm, as appears from the following very kind letter:

"TO JOSHUA REYNOLDS, ESQ. IN LEICESTER-FIELDS, LONDON.

"DEAR SIR,

"I DID not hear of your sickness till I heard likewise of your recovery, and therefore escape that part of your pain, which every man must feel, to whom you are known as you are known to me.

"Having had no particular account of your disorder, I know not in what state it has left you. If the amusement of my company can exhilarate the languor of a slow recovery, I will not delay a day to come to you; for I know not how I can so

effectually promote my own pleasure as by pleasing you, or my own interest as by preserving you, in whom, if I should lose you, I should lose almost the only man whom I call a friend.

"Pray let me hear of you from yourself, or from dear Miss Reynolds.[1] Make my compliments to Mr. Mudge. I am, dear Sir, your most affectionate and most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"At the Rev. Mr. Percy's at Easton Maudit, Northamptonshire (by Castle Ashby), Aug. 19, 1764."

Early in the year 1765, he paid a short visit to the University of Cambridge, with his friend Mr. Beauclerk. There is a lively picturesque account of his behaviour on this visit, in the "Gentleman's Magazine" for March 1785, being an extract of a letter from the late Dr. John Sharp. The two following sentences are very characteristical: "He drank his large potations of tea with me, interrupted by many an indignant contradiction, and many a noble sentiment.——Several persons got into his company the last evening at Trinity, where, about twelve, he began to be very great; stripped poor Mrs. Macaulay to the very skin, then gave her for his toast, and drank her in two bumpers."

The strictness of his self-examination, and scrupulous Christian humility, appear in his pious meditation on Easter-day this year.—"I purpose again to partake of the blessed sacrament; yet when I consider how vainly I have hitherto resolved at this annual commemoration of my Saviour's death, to regulate my life by his laws, I am almost afraid to renew my resolutions." The concluding words are very remarkable, and shew that he laboured under a severe depression of spirits. "Since the last Easter I have reformed no evil habit: my time has been unprofitably spent, and seems as a dream that has left nothing behind. *My memory grows confused, and*

[1] Sir Joshua's sister, for whom Johnson had a particular affection, and to whom he wrote many letters which I have seen, and which I am sorry her too nice delicacy will not permit to be published. B.

I know not how the days pass over me. Good Lord, deliver me!" (*Pr. and Med.* p. 61).

No man was more gratefully sensible of any kindness done to him than Johnson. There is a little circumstance in his diary this year, which shews him in a very amiable light.

"July 2. I paid Mr. Simpson ten guineas, which he had formerly lent me in my necessity, and for which Tetty expressed her gratitude."

"July 8. I lent Mr. Simpson ten guineas more."

Here he had a pleasing opportunity of doing the same kindness to an old friend, which he had formerly received from him. Indeed his liberality as to money was very remarkable. The next article in his diary is, "July 16, I received 75*l.* Lent Mr. Davies 25*l.*"

Trinity College, Dublin, at this time surprised Johnson with a spontaneous compliment of the highest academical honours, by creating him Doctor of Laws. The diploma, which is in my possession, is as follows:

"Omnibus, ad quos præsentes literæ pervenerint, salutem. Nos, Præpositus et Socii Seniores Collegii sacrosanctæ et individuæ Trinitatis Reginæ Elizabethæ juxta Dublin, testamur, Samueli Johnson, Armigero, ob egregiam scriptorum elegantiam et utilitatem, gratiam concessam fuisse pro gradu Doctoratûs in utroque Jure octavo die Julii, Anno Domini millesimo septingentesimo sexagesimo-quinto. In cujus rei testimonium singulorum manus et sigillum quo in hisce utimur apposuimus, vicesimo tertio die Julii, Anno Domini millesimo septingentesimo sexagesimo-quinto.

Gul. Clement.	Fran. Andrews.	R. Murray.
Tho. Wilson.	*Præp.*	Rob^tus^ Law.
Tho. Leland.		Mich. Kearney."

This unsolicited mark of distinction, conferred on so great a literary character, did much honour to the judgment and liberal spirit of that learned body. Johnson acknowledged the favour in a letter to Dr. Leland, one of their number; but I have not been able to obtain a copy of it.[1]

[1] Since the publication of the edition of 1804, a copy of this

He appears this year to have been seized with a temporary fit of ambition, for he had thoughts both of studying law, and of engaging in politics. His "Prayer before the Study of Law" is truly admirable:

"Sept. 26, 1765.

"Almighty God, the giver of wisdom, without whose help resolutions are vain, without whose blessing study is ineffectual; enable me, if it be thy will, to attain such knowledge as may qualify me to direct the doubtful, and instruct the ignorant; to prevent wrongs and terminate contentions; and grant that I may use that knowledge which I shall attain, to thy glory and my own salvation, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen" (*Pr. and Med.* p. 66).

His prayer in the view of becoming a politician is entitled, "Engaging in Politics with H——n." No doubt, his friend, the Right Honourable William Gerard Hamilton,[1] for whom, during a long acquaintance, he had

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letter was communicated to Malone by John Leland, son of the historian, to whom it was addressed:

"TO THE REV. DR. LELAND.—SIR, Among the names subscribed to the degree which I have had the honour of receiving from the University of Dublin, I find none of which I have any personal knowledge but those of Dr. Andrews and yourself. Men can be estimated by those who know them not, only as they are represented by those who know them; and therefore I flatter myself that I owe much of the pleasure which this distinction gives me, to your concurrence with Dr. Andrews in recommending me to the learned society. Having desired the Provost to return my general thanks to the University, I beg that you, Sir, will accept my particular and immediate acknowledgements. I am, Sir, your most obedient and most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, London, Oct. 17, 1765."

[1] Commonly known as Single-Speech Hamilton (1729–96). As a matter of fact he spoke, and spoke well, more than once both in the English and Irish Parliaments, of which latter he was a member from 1761 to 1768, when Secretary for Ireland under Lords Halifax and Townshend. But he never rose again to the

a great esteem, and to whose conversation he once paid this high compliment: "I am very unwilling to be left alone, Sir, and therefore I go with my company down the first pair of stairs, in some hopes that they may, perhaps, return again; I go with you, Sir, as far as the street-door." In what particular department he intended to engage, does not appear, nor can Mr. Hamilton explain. His prayer is in general terms: "Enlighten my understanding with the knowledge of right, and govern my will by thy laws, that no deceit may mislead me, nor temptation corrupt me; that I may always endeavour to do good, and hinder evil" (*Pr. and Med.* p. 67). There is nothing upon the subject in his diary.

This year was distinguished by his being introduced into the family of Mr. Thrale, one of the most eminent brewers in England, and Member of Parliament for the borough of Southwark. Foreigners are not a little amazed when they hear of brewers, distillers, and men in similar departments of trade, held forth as persons of considerable consequence. In this great commercial country it is natural that a situation which produces much wealth should be considered as very respectable; and, no doubt, honest industry is entitled to esteem. But, perhaps, the too rapid advances of men of low extraction tends to lessen the value of that distinction by birth and gentility, which has ever been found beneficial to the grand scheme of subordination. Johnson used to give this account of the rise of Mr. Thrale's father: "He worked at six shillings a week for twenty years in the great brewery, which afterwards was his own. The proprietor of it [1] had an only

height of his first speech delivered during the debate on the Address in 1755. After his return to England, though he sat in Parliament till his death, he never again addressed the House.

[1] The predecessor of old Thrale was Edmund Halsey, Esq.; the nobleman who married his daughter, was Lord Cobham, great uncle of the Marquis of Buckingham. But I believe, Dr. Johnson was mistaken in assigning so very low an origin to Mr. Thrale. The Clerk of St. Alban's, a very aged man, told me, that he (the elder Thrale) married a sister of Mr. Halsey. It is at least certain

daughter, who was married to a nobleman. It was not fit that a peer should continue the business. On the old man's death, therefore, the brewery was to be sold. To find a purchaser for so large a property was a difficult matter; and, after some time, it was suggested, that it would be advisable to treat with Thrale, a sensible, active, honest man, who had been employed in the house, and to transfer the whole to him for 30,000*l.*, security being taken upon the property. This was accordingly settled. In eleven years Thrale paid the purchase-money. He acquired a large fortune, and lived to be a Member of Parliament for Southwark.[1] But what was most remarkable was the liberality with which he used his riches. He gave his son and daughters the best education. The esteem which his good conduct procured him from the nobleman who had married his master's daughter, made him be treated with much attention; and his son, both at school and at the University of Oxford, associated with young men of the first rank. His allowance from his father, after he left college, was splendid; not less than a thousand a year. This, in a man who had risen as old Thrale did, was an extraordinary instance of generosity. He used to say, 'If this young dog does not find so much after I am gone as he expects, let him remember that he has had a great deal in my own time.'"

The son, though in affluent circumstances, had good sense enough to carry on his father's trade, which was of such extent, that I remember he once told me, he would not quit it for an annuity of ten thousand a year; "Not," said he, "that I get ten thousand a year by it, but it is an estate to a family." Having left daughters only, the property was sold for the immense sum of

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that the family of Thrale was of some consideration in that town: in the abbey church is a handsome monument to the memory of Mr. John Thrale, late of London, Merchant, who died in 1704, aged 54, Margaret his wife, and three of their children who died young between the years 1676 and 1690. *J. Blakeway.*

[1] He served the office of High Sheriff for Surrey in 1753, and died April 9, 1758.

135,000*l.*; a magnificent proof of what may be done by fair trade in a long period of time.

There may be some who think that a new system of gentility[1] might be established, upon principles totally different from what have hitherto prevailed. Our present heraldry, it may be said, is suited to the barbarous times in which it had its origin. It is chiefly founded upon ferocious merit, upon military excellence. Why, in civilized times, we may be asked, should there not be rank and honours, upon principles, which, independent of long custom, are certainly not less worthy, and which, when once allowed to be connected with elevation and precedency, would obtain the same dignity in our imagination? Why should not the knowledge, the skill, the expertness, the assiduity, and the spirited hazards, of trade and commerce, when crowned with success, be entitled to give those flattering distinctions by which mankind are so universally captivated?

Such are the specious, but false, arguments for a proposition which always will find numerous advocates, in a nation where men are every day starting up from obscurity to wealth. To refute them is needless. The general sense of mankind cries out, with irresistible force, "*Un gentilhomme est toujours gentilhomme.*"

Mr. Thrale had married Miss Hesther Lynch Salusbury, of good Welsh extraction, a lady of lively talents, improved by education. That Johnson's introduction into Mr. Thrale's family, which contributed so much to the

[1] Mrs. Burney informs me that she heard Dr. Johnson say, "An English Merchant is a new species of Gentleman." He, perhaps, had in his mind the following ingenious passage in *The Conscious Lovers* [by Steele], Act iv. Scene ii., where Mr. Sealand thus addresses Sir John Bevil: "Give me leave to say, that we merchants are a species of gentry that have grown into the world this last century, and are as honourable, and almost as useful, as you landed folks, that have always thought yourselves so much above us; for your trading forsooth is extended no farther than a load of hay, or a fat ox.—You are pleasant people indeed! because you are generally bred up to be lazy, therefore, I warrant you, industry is dishonourable." B.

happiness of his life, was owing to her desire for his conversation, is a very probable and the general supposition: but it is not the truth. Mr. Murphy, who was intimate with Mr. Thrale, having spoken very highly of Dr. Johnson, he was requested to make them acquainted. This being mentioned to Johnson, he accepted an invitation to dinner at Thrale's, and was so much pleased with his reception, both by Mr. and Mrs. Thrale, and they so much pleased with him, that his invitations to their house were more and more frequent, till at last he became one of the family, and an apartment was appropriated to him, both in their house at Southwark and in their villa at Streatham.

Johnson had a very sincere esteem for Mr. Thrale, as a man of excellent principles, a good scholar, well skilled in trade, of a sound understanding, and of manners such as presented the character of a plain independent English Squire. As this family will frequently be mentioned in the course of the following pages, and as a false notion has prevailed that Mr. Thrale was inferior, and in some degree insignificant, compared with Mrs. Thrale, it may be proper to give a true state of the case from the authority of Johnson himself in his own words.

"I know no man," said he, "who is more master of his wife and family than Thrale. If he but holds up a finger, he is obeyed. It is a great mistake to suppose that she is above him in literary attainments. She is more flippant; but he has ten times her learning: he is a regular scholar; but her learning is that of a schoolboy in one of the lower forms." My readers may naturally wish for some representation of the figures of this couple. Mr. Thrale was tall, well proportioned, and stately. As for *Madam*, or *my Mistress*, by which epithets Johnson used to mention Mrs. Thrale, she was short, plump, and brisk. She has herself given us a lively view of the idea which Johnson had of her person, on her appearing before him in a dark-coloured gown: "You little creatures should never wear those sort of clothes, however; they are unsuitable in every way. What! have not all insects gay colours?" (*Anecdotes*, p. 279). Mr. Thrale gave his

wife a liberal indulgence, both in the choice of their company, and in the mode of entertaining them. He understood and valued Johnson, without remission, from their first acquaintance to the day of his death. Mrs. Thrale was enchanted with Johnson's conversation for its own sake, and had also a very allowable vanity in appearing to be honoured with the attention of so celebrated a man.

Nothing could be more fortunate for Johnson than this connexion. He had at Mr. Thrale's all the comforts and even luxuries of life; his melancholy was diverted, and his irregular habits lessened by association with an agreeable and well-ordered family. He was treated with the utmost respect, and even affection. The vivacity of Mrs. Thrale's literary talk roused him to cheerfulness and exertion, even when they were alone. But this was not often the case; for he found here a constant succession of what gave him the highest enjoyment, the society of the learned, the witty, and the eminent in every way; who were assembled in numerous companies, called forth his wonderful powers, and gratified him with admiration, to which no man could be insensible.

In the October of this year he at length gave to the world his edition of "Shakespeare," which, if it had no other merit but that of producing his Preface, in which the excellences and defects of that immortal bard are displayed with a masterly hand, the nation would have had no reason to complain. A blind indiscriminate admiration of Shakespeare had exposed the British nation to the ridicule of foreigners. Johnson, by candidly admitting the faults of his poet, had the more credit in bestowing on him deserved and indisputable praise; and doubtless none of all his panegyrists have done him half so much honour. Their praise was like that of a counsel, upon his own side of the cause: Johnson's was like the grave, well considered, and impartial opinion of the judge, which falls from his lips with weight, and is received with reverence. What he did as a commentator has no small share of merit, though his researches were not so ample, and his investigations so acute, as they might have been, which we now

certainly know from the labours of other able and ingenious critics who have followed him. He has enriched his edition with a concise account of each play, and of its characteristic excellence. Many of his notes have illustrated obscurities in the text, and placed passages eminent for beauty in a more conspicuous light; and he has in general, exhibited such a mode of annotation, as may be beneficial to all subsequent editors.[1]

His "Shakespeare" was virulently attacked by Mr. William Kenrick, who obtained the degree of LL.D. from a Scotch University, and wrote for the booksellers in a great variety of branches. Though he certainly was not without considerable merit, he wrote with so little regard to decency, and principles, and decorum, and in so hasty a manner, that his reputation was neither extensive nor lasting. I remember one evening, when some of his works were mentioned, Dr. Goldsmith said, he had never heard of them; upon which Dr. Johnson observed, "Sir, he is one of the many who have made themselves *public*, without making themselves *known*."[2]

A young student of Oxford, of the name of Barclay, wrote an answer to Kenrick's review of Johnson's "Shakespeare." Johnson was at first angry that Kenrick's attack should have the credit of an answer. But afterwards, considering the young man's good intention, he kindly noticed him, and probably would have done more, had not the young man died.

In his Preface to "Shakespeare," Johnson treated Voltaire very contemptuously, observing, upon some of his

[1] The editors of the *Cambridge Shakespeare* consider Johnson's Preface and notes to be "distinguished by clearness of thought, diction, and by masterly common sense." The Preface is certainly a masterpiece both of good sense and good criticism; while the notes are at least less deficient in both than those of many commentators before and since Johnson.

[2] Kenrick afterwards attacked both Goldsmith and Garrick. The latter brought an action for libel against him, and received an abject apology. See Goldsmith's *Retaliation*, Prior's *Life of Goldsmith*, and the *Garrick Correspondence*. Kenrick founded the *London Review* and edited it till his death in 1779.

remarks, "These are the petty cavils of petty minds." Voltaire, in revenge, made an attack upon Johnson, in one of his numerous literary sallies which I remember to have read; but there being no general index to his voluminous works, I have searched in vain, and therefore cannot quote it.[1]

Voltaire was an antagonist with whom I thought Johnson should not disdain to contend. I pressed him to answer. He said, he perhaps might; but he never did.

Mr. Burney having occasion to write to Johnson for some receipts for subscriptions to his "Shakespeare," which Johnson had omitted to deliver when the money was paid, he availed himself of that opportunity of thanking Johnson for the great pleasure which he had received from the perusal of his Preface to "Shakespeare"; which, although it excited much clamour against him at first, is now justly ranked among the most excellent of his writings. To this letter Johnson returned the following answer:

"TO CHARLES BURNEY, ESQ. IN POLAND STREET.

"SIR,

"I AM sorry that your kindness to me has brought upon you so much trouble, though you have taken care to abate that sorrow, by the pleasure which I receive from your approbation. I defend my criticism in the same manner with you. We must confess the faults of our favourite, to gain credit to our praise of his excellences. He that claims, either in himself or for another, the honours of perfection, will surely injure the reputation which he designs to assist.

"Be pleased to make my compliments to your family. I am, Sir, your most obliged and most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"Oct. 16, 1765."

From one of his Journals I transcribe what follows:—

"At church, Oct.—65.

"To avoid all singularity; *Bonaventura*.[2]

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[1] See his *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, "Art Dramatique," Works, ed. 1784, xxxviii. 10.

[2] He was probably proposing to himself the model of this

"To come in before service, and compose my mind by meditation, or by reading some portions of Scripture. *Tetty.*

"If I can hear the sermon, to attend it, unless attention be more troublesome than useful.

"To consider the act of prayer as a reposal of myself upon God, and a resignation of all into his holy hand."

In 1764 and 1765 it should seem that Dr. Johnson was so busily employed with his edition of "Shakespeare," as to have had little leisure for any other literary exertion, or, indeed, even for private correspondence. He did not favour me with a single letter for more than two years, for which it will appear that he afterwards apologized.

He was, however, at all times ready to give assistance to his friends, and others, in revising their works, and in writing for them, or greatly improving, their Dedications. In that courtly species of composition no man excelled Dr. Johnson. Though the loftiness of his mind prevented him from ever dedicating in his own person, he wrote a very great number of Dedications for others. Some of these, the persons who were favoured with them are unwilling should be mentioned, from a too anxious apprehension, as I think, that they might be suspected of having received larger assistance; and some, after all the diligence I have bestowed, have escaped my inquiries. He told me, a great many years ago, "he believed he had dedicated to all the Royal Family round;" and it was indifferent to him what was the subject of the work dedicated, provided it were innocent. He once dedicated some music for the German Flute to Edward Duke of York. In writing Dedications for others, he considered himself as by no means speaking his own sentiments.

Notwithstanding his long silence, I never omitted to write to him, when I had any thing worthy of communicating. I generally kept copies of my letters to him, that I might have a full view of our correspondence, and never be at a loss to understand any reference in his letters. He

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excellent person, who for his piety was named *The Seraphic Doctor.* B.

kept the greater part of mine very carefully; and a short time before his death was attentive enough to seal them up in bundles, and order them to be delivered to me, which was accordingly done. Amongst them I found one, of which I had not made a copy, and which I own I read with pleasure at the distance of almost twenty years. It is dated November, 1765, at the palace of Pascal Paoli, in Corte, the capital of Corsica, and is full of generous enthusiasm. After giving a sketch of what I had seen and heard in that island, it proceeded thus: "I dare to call this a spirited tour. I dare to challenge your approbation."

This letter produced the following answer, which I found on my arrival at Paris.

"*A Mr. Mr.* BOSWELL, *chez Mr.* WATERS, *Banquier, à Paris.*

"DEAR SIR,

"APOLOGIES are seldom of any use. We will delay till your arrival the reasons, good or bad, which have made me such a sparing and ungrateful correspondent. Be assured, for the present, that nothing has lessened either the esteem or love with which I dismissed you at Harwich. Both have been increased by all that I have been told of you by yourself or others; and when you return, you will return to an unaltered, and, I hope, unalterable friend.

"All that you have to fear from me is the vexation of disappointing me. No man loves to frustrate expectations which have been formed in his favour; and the pleasure which I promise myself from your journals and remarks is so great, that perhaps no degree of attention or discernment will be sufficient to afford it.

"Come home, however, and take your chance. I long to see you, and to hear you; and hope that we shall not be so long separated again. Come home, and expect such welcome as is due to him, whom a wise and noble curiosity has led, where perhaps no native of this country ever was before.

"I have no news to tell you that can deserve your notice; nor would I willingly lessen the pleasure that any novelty may give you at your return. I am afraid we shall find it difficult to keep among us a mind which has been so long feasted with variety. But let us try what esteem and kindness can effect.

"As your father's liberality has indulged you with so long a ramble, I doubt not but you will think his sickness, or even his

desire to see you, a sufficient reason for hastening your return. The longer we live, and the more we think, the higher value we learn to put on the friendship and tenderness of parents and of friends. Parents we can have but once; and he promises himself too much, who enters life with the expectation of finding many friends. Upon some motive, I hope that you will be here soon; and am willing to think that it will be an inducement to your return, that it is sincerely desired by, dear Sir, your affectionate humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"Johnson's Court, Fleet Street,
"January 14, 1766."

I returned to London in February, and found Dr. Johnson in a good house in Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, in which he had accommodated Miss Williams with an apartment on the ground-floor, while Mr. Levett occupied his post in the garret: his faithful Francis was still attending upon him. He received me with much kindness. The fragments of our first conversation, which I have preserved, are these: I told him that Voltaire, in a conversation with me, had distinguished Pope and Dryden thus:—"Pope drives a handsome chariot, with a couple of neat trim nags; Dryden a coach, and six stately horses!" JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, the truth is, they both drive coaches and six; but Dryden's horses are either galloping or stumbling: Pope's go at a steady even trot."[1] He said of Goldsmith's "Traveller," which had been published in my absence, "There has not been so fine a poem since Pope's time."

[1] It is remarkable that Mr. Gray has employed somewhat the same image to characterize Dryden. He, indeed, furnishes his car with but two horses; but they are of "ethereal race:"

"Behold where Dryden's less presumptuous car,
Wide o'er the fields of glory bear
Two coursers of ethereal race,
With necks in thunder cloth'd, and long resounding pace."
Ode on the Progress of Poesy. B.

See the comparison between the two men in the *Lives of the Poets* (Pope).

And here it is proper to settle, with authentic precision, what has long floated in public report, as to Johnson's being himself the author of a considerable part of that poem. Much, no doubt, both of the sentiments and expression, were derived from conversation with him; and it was certainly submitted to his friendly revision: but in the year 1783, he, at my request, marked with a pencil the lines which he had furnished, which are only line 420th,

"To stop too fearful, and too faint to go;"

and the concluding ten lines, except the last couplet but one, which I distinguish by the Italic character:

"How small of all that human hearts endure,
That part which kings or laws can cause or cure.
Still to ourselves in every place consign'd,
Our own felicity we make or find;
With secret course, which no loud storms annoy,
Glides the smooth current of domestic joy:
The lifted axe, the agonizing wheel,
Luke's iron crown, and Damien's bed of steel,
To men remote from power, but rarely known,
Leave reason, faith, and conscience, all our own."

He added, "These are all of which I can be sure." They bear a small proportion to the whole, which consists of four hundred and thirty-eight verses. Goldsmith, in the couplet which he inserted, mentions *Luke* as a person well known, and superficial readers have passed it over quite smoothly; while those of more attention have been as much perplexed by *Luke*, as by *Lydiat* in "The Vanity of Human Wishes." The truth is, that Goldsmith himself was in a mistake. In the "Respublica Hungarica," there is an account of a desperate rebellion in the year 1514, headed by two brothers, of the name of *Zeck*, George and Luke. When it was quelled, *George*, not *Luke*, was punished by his head being encircled with a red-hot iron crown: "*corona candescente ferrea coronatur.*"[1] The same

[1] Boswell himself falls into another blunder. The name of the brothers was not Zeck but Dosa. For the probable origin of the blunder see Forster's *Life of Goldsmith.*

severity of torture was exercised on the Earl of Athol, one of the murderers of King James I. of Scotland.

Dr. Johnson at the same time favoured me by marking the lines which he furnished to Goldsmith's "Deserted Village," which are only the last four :

> "That trade's proud empire hastes to swift decay,
> As ocean sweeps the labour'd mole away :
> While self-dependent power can time defy,
> As rocks resist the billows and the sky."

Talking of education, "People have now-a-days," said he, "got a strange opinion that every thing should be taught by lectures. Now, I cannot see that lectures can do so much good as reading the books from which the lectures are taken. I know nothing that can be best taught by lectures, except where experiments are to be shewn. You may teach chemistry by lectures.—You might teach making of shoes by lectures!"

At night I supped with him at the Mitre Tavern, that we might renew our social intimacy at the original place of meeting. But there was now a considerable difference in his way of living. Having had an illness, in which he was advised to leave off wine, he had, from that period, continued to abstain from it, and drank only water, or lemonade.

I told him that a foreign friend of his, whom I had met with abroad, was so wretchedly perverted to infidelity, that he treated the hopes of immortality with brutal levity; and said, "As man dies like a dog, let him lie like a dog."[1] Johnson : "*If* he dies like a dog, *let* him lie like a dog." I added, that this man said to me, "I hate mankind, for I think myself one of the best of them, and I know how bad I am." Johnson : "Sir, he must be very singular in his opinion, if he thinks himself one of the best of men ; for none of his friends think him so."—He said, "No

[1] Croker assumes this friend to have been Baretti, whom Boswell might have met on his travels, as they were in Italy at the same time, and of whom Malone wrote, "He appears to be an infidel."

honest man could be a Deist; for no man could be so after a fair examination of the proofs of Christianity." I named Hume. JOHNSON: "No, Sir; Hume owned to a clergyman in the bishopric of Durham, that he had never read the New Testament with attention."—I mentioned Hume's notion, that all who are happy are equally happy; a little miss with a new gown at a dancing-school ball, a general at the head of a victorious army, and an orator after having made an eloquent speech in a great assembly. JOHNSON: "Sir, that all who are happy, are equally happy, is not true. A peasant and a philosopher may be equally *satisfied*, but not equally *happy*. Happiness consists in the multiplicity of agreeable consciousness. A peasant has not capacity for having equal happiness with a philosopher." I remember this very question very happily illustrated in opposition to Hume, by the Reverend Mr. Robert Brown, at Utrecht. "A small drinking-glass and a large one," said he, "may be equally full; but the large one holds more than the small."[1]

Dr. Johnson was very kind this evening, and said to me, "You have now lived five-and-twenty years, and you have employed them well." "Alas, Sir," said I, "I fear not. Do I know history? Do I know mathematics? Do I know law?" JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, though you may know no science so well as to be able to teach it, and no profession so well as to be able to follow it, your general mass of knowledge of books and men renders you very capable to make yourself master of any science, or fit yourself for any profession." I mentioned that a gay friend had advised me against being a lawyer, because I should be excelled by plodding blockheads. JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, in the formulary and statutory part of law, a plodding blockhead may excel; but in the ingenious and rational part of it a plodding blockhead can never excel."

I talked of the mode adopted by some to rise in the world, by courting great men, and asked him whether he

[1] Malone has shewn that Bishop Hall had used the same illustration in discussing the same subject; *Epistles*, Dec. iii. c. 6.

had ever submitted to it. JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, I never was near enough to great men to court them. You may be prudently attached to great men, and yet independent. You are not to do what you think wrong; and, Sir, you are to calculate, and not pay too dear for what you get. You must not give a shilling's worth of court for sixpence worth of good. But if you can get a shilling's worth of good for sixpence worth of court, you are a fool if you do not pay court."

He said, "If convents should be allowed at all, they should only be retreats for persons unable to serve the public, or who have served it. It is our first duty to serve society; and, after we have done that, we may attend wholly to the salvation of our own souls. A youthful passion for abstracted devotion should not be encouraged."

I introduced the subject of second sight, and other mysterious manifestations; the fulfilment of which, I suggested, might happen by chance. JOHNSON: "Yes, Sir, but they have happened so often, that mankind have agreed to think them not fortuitous."

I talked to him a great deal of what I had seen in Corsica, and of my intention to publish an account of it. He encouraged me by saying, "You cannot go to the bottom of the subject; but all that you tell us will be new to us. Give us as many anecdotes as you can."

Our next meeting at the Mitre was on Saturday, the 15th of February, when I presented to him my old and most intimate friend, the Reverend Mr. Temple, then of Cambridge. I having mentioned that I had passed some time with Rousseau in his wild retreat, and having quoted some remark made by Mr. Wilkes, with whom I had spent many pleasant hours in Italy, Johnson said (sarcastically), "It seems, Sir, you have kept very good company abroad, Rousseau and Wilkes!" Thinking it enough to defend one at a time, I said nothing as to my gay friend, but answered with a smile, "My dear Sir, you don't call Rousseau bad company. Do you really think *him* a bad man?" JOHNSON: "Sir, if you are talking jestingly of this, I don't talk with you. If you mean to be serious, I

think him one of the worst of men ; a rascal, who ought to be hunted out of society, as he has been. Three or four nations have expelled him : and it is a shame that he is protected in this country." BOSWELL: "I don't deny, Sir, but that his novel[1] may, perhaps, do harm ; but I cannot think his intention was bad." JOHNSON: "Sir, that will not do. We cannot prove any man's intention to be bad. You may shoot a man through the head, and say you intended to miss him; but the judge will order you to be hanged. An alleged want of intention, when evil is committed, will not be allowed in a court of justice. Rousseau, Sir, is a very bad man. I would sooner sign a sentence for his transportation, than that of any felon who has gone from the Old Bailey these many years. Yes, I should like to have him work in the plantations." BOSWELL: "Sir, do you think him as bad a man as Voltaire?" JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, it is difficult to settle the proportion of iniquity between them."

This violence seemed very strange to me, who had read many of Rousseau's animated writings with great pleasure, and even edification; had been much pleased with his society, and was just come from the Continent, where he was very generally admired. Nor can I yet allow that he deserves the very severe censure which Johnson pronounced upon him. His absurd preference of savage to civilized life, and other singularities, are proofs rather of a defect in his understanding, than of any depravity in his heart. And notwithstanding the unfavourable opinion which many worthy men have expressed of his "*Profession de Foi du Vicaire Savoyard*," I cannot help admiring it as the performance of a man full of sincere reverential submission to Divine Mystery, though beset with perplexing doubts : a state of mind to be viewed with pity rather than with anger.

On his favourite subject of subordination, Johnson said, "So far is it from being true that men are naturally equal, that no two people can be half an hour together,

[1] *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse*, published at Amsterdam in 1760.

but one shall acquire an evident superiority over the other."

I mentioned the advice given us by philosophers, to console ourselves, when distressed or embarrassed, by thinking of those who are in a worse situation than ourselves. This, I observed, could not apply to all, for there must be some who have nobody worse than they are. JOHNSON: "Why, to be sure, Sir, there are; but they don't know it. There is no being so poor and so contemptible, who does not think there is somebody still poorer, and still more contemptible."

As my stay in London at this time was very short I had not many opportunities of being with Dr. Johnson; but I felt my veneration for him in no degree lessened, by my having seen *multorum hominum mores et urbes*. On the contrary, by having it in my power to compare him with many of the most celebrated persons of other countries, my admiration of his extraordinary mind was increased and confirmed.

The roughness, indeed, which sometimes appeared in his manners, was more striking to me now, from my having been accustomed to the studied smooth complying habits of the Continent; and I clearly recognized in him, not without respect for his honest conscientious zeal, the same indignant and sarcastical mode of treating every attempt to unhinge or weaken good principles.

One evening, when a young gentleman teased him with an account of the infidelity of his servant, who, he said, would not believe the Scriptures, because he could not read them in the original tongues, and be sure that they were not invented; "Why, foolish fellow," said Johnson, "has he any better authority for almost every thing that he believes?" BOSWELL: "Then the vulgar, Sir, never can know they are right, but must submit themselves to the learned." JOHNSON: "To be sure, Sir. The vulgar are the children of the State, and must be taught like children." BOSWELL: "Then, Sir, a poor Turk must be a Mahometan, just as a poor Englishman must be a Christian?" JOHNSON: "Why, yes, Sir; and what

then? This now is such stuff as I used to talk to my mother, when I first began to think myself a clever fellow; and she ought to have whipped me for it."

Another evening Dr. Goldsmith and I called on him, with the hope of prevailing on him to sup with us at the Mitre. We found him indisposed, and resolved not to go abroad. "Come then," said Goldsmith, "we will not go to the Mitre to-night, since we cannot have the big man with us." Johnson then called for a bottle of port, of which Goldsmith and I partook, while our friend, now a water-drinker, sat by us. GOLDSMITH: "I think, Mr. Johnson, you don't go near the theatres now. You give yourself no more concern about a new play, than if you had never had any thing to do with the stage." JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, our tastes greatly alter. The lad does not care for the child's rattle, and the old man does not care for the young man's whore." GOLDSMITH: "Nay, Sir; but your Muse was not a whore." JOHNSON: "Sir, I do not think she was. But as we advance in the journey of life we drop some of the things which have pleased us; whether it be that we are fatigued and don't choose to carry so many things any farther, or that we find other things which we like better." BOSWELL: "But, Sir, why don't you give us something in some other way?" GOLDSMITH: "Ay, Sir, we have a claim upon you." JOHNSON: "No, Sir, I am not obliged to do any more. No man is obliged to do as much as he can do. A man is to have part of his life to himself. If a soldier has fought a good many campaigns, he is not to be blamed if he retires to ease and tranquillity. A physician, who has practised long in a great city, may be excused if he retires to a small town, and takes less practice. Now, Sir, the good I can do by my conversation bears the same proportion to the good I can do by my writings, that the practice of a physician, retired to a small town, does to his practice in a great city." BOSWELL: "But I wonder, Sir, you have not more pleasure in writing than in not writing." JOHNSON: "Sir, you *may* wonder."

He talked of making verses, and observed: "The

great difficulty is, to know when you have made good ones. When composing, I have generally had them in my mind, perhaps fifty at a time, walking up and down in my room; and then I have written them down, and often, from laziness, have written only half lines. I have written a hundred lines in a day. I remember I wrote a hundred lines of 'The Vanity of Human Wishes' in a day. Doctor (turning to Goldsmith), I am not quite idle; I made one line t'other day; but I made no more." GOLDSMITH: "Let us hear it; we'll put a bad one to it." JOHNSON: "No, Sir; I have forgot it."

Such specimens of the easy and playful conversation of the great Dr. Samuel Johnson are, I think, to be prized; as exhibiting the little varieties of a mind so enlarged and so powerful when objects of consequence required its exertions, and as giving us a minute knowledge of his character and modes of thinking.

"TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ. AT LANGTON, NEAR SPILSBY, LINCOLNSHIRE.

"DEAR SIR,

"WHAT your friends have done, that from your departure till now nothing has been heard of you, none of us are able to inform the rest; but as we are all neglected alike, no one thinks himself entitled to the privilege of complaint.

"I should have known nothing of you or of Langton, from the time that dear Miss Langton left us, had not I met Mr. Simpson, of Lincoln, one day in the street, by whom I was informed that Mr. Langton, your mamma, and yourself, had been all ill, but that you were all recovered.

"That sickness should suspend your correspondence, I did not wonder; but hoped that it would be renewed at your recovery.

"Since you will not inform us where you are, or how you live, I know not whether you desire to know any thing of us. However, I will tell you that THE CLUB subsists; but we have the loss of Burke's company since he has been engaged in public business, in which he has gained more reputation than perhaps any man at his [first] appearance ever gained before. He made two speeches in the House for repealing the Stamp Act, which were publicly commended by Mr. Pitt, and have filled the town with wonder.[1]

[1] Burke was returned to Parliament in December 1765, during

"Burke is a great man by nature, and is expected soon to attain civil greatness. I am grown greater too, for I have maintained the newspapers these many weeks; and what is greater still, I have risen every morning since New Year's day, at about eight: when I was up, I have indeed done but little; yet it is no slight advancement to obtain for so many hours more, the consciousness of being.

"I wish you were in my new study; I am now writing the first letter in it. I think it looks very pretty about me.

"Dyer[1] is constant at THE CLUB; Hawkins is remiss; I am not over diligent. Dr. Nugent, Dr. Goldsmith, and Mr. Reynolds, are very constant. Mr. Lye is printing his Saxon and Gothic Dictionary: all THE CLUB subscribes.[2]

"You will pay my respects to all my Lincolnshire friends. I am, dear Sir, most affectionately yours,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"March 9, 1766,
"Johnson's Court, Fleet Street."

"TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ. AT LANGTON, NEAR SPILSBY, LINCOLNSHIRE.

"DEAR SIR,

"IN supposing that I should be more than commonly affected by the death of Peregrine Langton,[3] you were not mistaken; he was one of those whom I loved at once by instinct and by reason. I have seldom indulged more hope of any thing than of being able to improve our acquaintance to friendship. Many a time have I placed myself again at Langton, and imagined the pleasure with which I should walk to Partney[4] in a summer morning; but this is no longer possible. We must now endeavour

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Lord Rockingham's Ministry, as Member for Wendover, Bucks, a borough of Lord Verney's. The speeches on the Stamp Act were made in the following January and February.

[1] Samuel Dyer (1725–72) studied at Glasgow and Leyden, and served on the Commissariat of the English army in Germany during the Seven Years' War. He was a man of much learning, and generally popular for his pleasant temper and manners. He was a Fellow of the Royal Society, and the first member elected to the Club after its formation.

[2] Edward Lye died in the following year 1767; his Dictionary was published in 1772.

[3] Mr. Langton's uncle. B.

[4] The place of residence of Mr. Peregrine Langton. B.

to preserve what is left us,—his example of piety and economy. I hope you make what inquiries you can, and write down what is told you. The little things which distinguish domestic characters are soon forgotten; if you delay to inquire, you will have no information; if you neglect to write, information will be vain.[1]

[1] Mr. Langton did not disregard this counsel, but wrote the following account, which he has been pleased to communicate to me: "The circumstances of Mr. Peregrine Langton were these. He had an annuity for life of two hundred pounds *per annum*. He resided in a village in Lincolnshire: the rent of his house, with two or three small fields, was twenty-eight pounds; the county he lived in was not more than moderately cheap; his family consisted of a sister, who paid him eighteen pounds annually for her board, and a niece. The servants were two maids, and two men in livery. His common way of living, at his table, was three or four dishes; the appurtenances to his table were neat and handsome; he frequently entertained company at dinner, and then his table was well served with as many dishes as were usual at the tables of the other gentlemen in the neighbourhood. His own appearance, as to clothes, was genteelly neat and plain. He had always a post-chaise, and kept three horses. Such, with the resources I have mentioned, was his way of living, which he did not suffer to employ his whole income: for he had always a sum of money lying by him for any extraordinary expenses that might arise. Some money he put into the stocks; at his death, the sum he had there amounted to one hundred and fifty pounds. He purchased out of his income his household furniture and linen, of which latter he had a very ample store; and, as I am assured by those that had very good means of knowing, not less than the tenth part of his income was set apart for charity; at the time of his death, the sum of twenty-five pounds was found, with a direction to be employed in such uses. He had laid down a plan of living proportioned to his income, and did not practise any extraordinary degree of parsimony, but endeavoured that in his family there should be plenty without waste. As an instance that this was his endeavour, it may be worth while to mention a method he took in regulating a proper allowance of malt liquor to be drunk in his family, that there might not be a deficiency, or any intemperate profusion. On a complaint made that his allowance of a hogshead in a month was not enough for his own family, he ordered the quantity of a hogshead to be put into bottles, had it locked up from the servants, and distributed out, every day, eight quarts, which is the quantity each day at one hogshead in a month; and told his servants, that if that did not suffice, he would allow them

"His art of life certainly deserves to be known and studied. He lived in plenty and elegance upon an income which, to many

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more; but, by this method, it appeared at once that the allowance was much more than sufficient for his small family; and this proved a clear conviction, that could not be answered and saved all future dispute. He was, in general, very diligently and punctually attended and obeyed by his servants; he was very considerate as to the injunctions he gave, and explained them distinctly; and, at their first coming to his service, steadily exacted a close compliance with them, without any remission: and the servants finding this to be the case, soon grew habitually accustomed to the practice of their business, and then very little farther attention was necessary. On extraordinary instances of good behaviour, or diligent service, he was not wanting in particular encouragements and presents above their wages: it is remarkable that he would permit their relations to visit them, and stay at his house two or three days at a time. The wonder, with most that hear an account of his economy, will be, how he was able, with such an income, to do so much, especially when it is considered that he paid for every thing he had. He had no land, except the two or three small fields which I have said he rented; and, instead of gaining any thing by their produce, I have reason to think he lost by them; however, they furnished him with no farther assistance towards his housekeeping than grass for his horses (not hay, for that I know he bought), and for two cows. Every Monday morning he settled his family accounts, and so kept up a constant attention to the confining his expenses within his income; and to do it more exactly, compared those expenses with a computation he had made, how much that income would afford him every week and day of the year. One of his economical practices was, as soon as any repair was wanting in or about his house, to have it immediately performed. When he had money to spare, he chose to lay in a provision of linen or clothes, or any other necessaries; as then, he said, he could afford it, which he might not be so well able to do when the actual want came; in consequence of which method, he had a considerable supply of necessary articles lying by him, beside what was in use. But the main particular that seems to have enabled him to do so much with his income, was, that he paid for every thing as soon as he had it, except, alone, what were current accounts, such as rent for his house and servants' wages; and these he paid at the stated times with the utmost exactness. He gave notice to the tradesmen of the neighbouring market towns, that they should no longer have his custom, if they let any of his servants have any thing without their paying for it. Thus

would appear indigent, and to most, scanty. How he lived, therefore, every man has an interest in knowing. His death, I hope, was peaceful; it was surely happy.

"I wish I had written sooner, lest, writing now, I should renew your grief; but I would not forbear saying what I have now said.

"This loss is, I hope, the only misfortune of a family to whom no misfortune at all should happen, if my wishes could avert it. Let me know how you all go on. Has Mr. Langton got him the little horse that I recommended? It would do him good to ride about his estate in fine weather.

"Be pleased to make my compliments to Mrs. Langton, and to dear Miss Langton, and Miss Di, and Miss Juliet, and to everybody else.

"THE CLUB holds very well together. Monday is my night.[1] I continue to rise tolerably well, and read more than I did. I hope something will yet come on it. I am, Sir, your most affectionate servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"May 10, 1766,
"Johnson's Court, Fleet Street."

After I had been some time in Scotland, I mentioned to him in a letter that, "On my first return to my native country, after some years of absence, I was told of a vast number of my acquaintance who were all gone to the land of forgetfulness, and I found myself like a man stalking over a field of battle, who every moment perceives some one lying dead." I complained of irresolution, and mentioned my having made a vow as a security for good

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he put it out of his power to commit those imprudences to which those are liable that defer their payments by using their money some other way than where it ought to go. And whatever money he had by him, he knew that it was not demanded elsewhere, but that he might safely employ it as he pleased. His example was confined, by the sequestered place of his abode, to the observation of few, though his prudence and virtue would have made it valuable to all who could have known it. These few particulars, which I knew myself, or have obtained from those who lived with him, may afford instruction, and be an incentive to that wise art of living, which he so successfully practised." B.

[1] Of his being in the chair of THE LITERARY CLUB, which at this time met once a week in the evening. B.

conduct. I wrote to him again without being able to move his indolence; nor did I hear from him till he had received a copy of my inaugural Exercise, or Thesis in Civil Law, which I published at my admission as an Advocate, as is the custom in Scotland. He then wrote to me as follows:

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"DEAR SIR,

"THE reception of your Thesis put me in mind of my debt to you. Why did you * * * *[1] I will punish you for it, by telling you that your Latin wants correction.[2] In the beginning, *Spei alteræ*, not to urge that it should be *primæ*, is not grammatical: *alteræ* should be *alteri*. In the next line you seem to use *genus* absolutely, for what we call *family*, that is, for *illustrious extraction*, I doubt without authority. *Homines nullius originis*, for *Nullis orti majoribus*, or, *Nullo loco nati*, is, as I am afraid, barbarous. —Ruddiman is dead.[3]

"I have now vexed you enough, and will try to please you. Your resolution to obey your father I sincerely approve; but do not accustom yourself to enchain your volatility by vows; they will sometime leave a thorn in your mind, which you will, perhaps, never be able to extract or eject. Take this warning; it is of great importance.

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[1] The passage omitted alluded to a private transaction. B.

[2] This censure of my Latin relates to the Dedication, which was as follows:

Viro nobilissimo, ornatissimo, JOANNI, VICECOMITI MOUNTSTUART, atavis edito regibus, excelsæ familiæ de Bute spei alteræ; labente seculo, quum homines nullius originis genus æquare opibus aggrediuntur, sanguinis antiqui et illustris semper memori, natalium splendorem virtutibus augenti: ad publica populi comitia jam legato; in optimatium vero magnæ Britanniæ senatu, jure hæreditario, olim concessuro: vim insitam varia doctrina promovente, nec tamen se venditante: prædito prisca fide, animo liberrimo, et morum elegantia insigni: in Italiæ visitandæ itinere, socio suo honoratissimo, hasce jurisprudentiæ primitias, devinctissimæ amicitiæ et observantiæ monumentum, D. D. C. Q. JACOBUS BOSWELL. B.

[3] Ruddiman (1674–1757) was a famous grammarian. So it used to be said that *Priscian's head was broken.*

"The study of the law is what you very justly term it, copious and generous;[1] and in adding your name to its professors, you have done exactly what I always wished, when I wished you best. I hope that you will continue to pursue it vigorously and constantly. You gain, at least, what is no small advantage, security from those troublesome and wearisome discontents, which are always obtruding themselves upon a mind vacant, unemployed, and undetermined.

"You ought to think it no small inducement to diligence and perseverance, that they will please your father. We all live upon the hope of pleasing somebody; and the pleasure of pleasing ought to be greatest, and at last always will be greatest, when our endeavours are exerted in consequence of our duty.

"Life is not long, and too much of it must not pass in idle deliberation how it shall be spent: deliberation, which those who begin it by prudence, and continue it with subtilty, must, after long expense of thought, conclude by chance. To prefer one future mode of life to another, upon just reasons, requires faculties which it has not pleased our Creator to give us.

"If therefore the profession you have chosen has some unexpected inconveniences, console yourself by reflecting that no profession is without them; and that all the importunities and perplexities of business are softness and luxury, compared with the incessant cravings of vacancy, and the unsatisfactory expedients of idleness.

> 'Hæc sunt, quæ nostra potui te voce monere;
> Vade, age.'[2]

"As to your history of Corsica, you have no materials which others have not, or may not have. You have, somehow or other, warmed your imagination. I wish there were some cure, like the lover's leap, for all heads of which some single idea has obtained an unreasonable and irregular possession. Mind your own affairs, and leave the Corsicans to theirs. I am, dear Sir, your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"London, Aug. 21, 1766."

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[1] This alludes to the first sentence of the Proæmium of my Thesis. "JURISPRUDENTIÆ studio nullum uberius, nullum generosius: in legibus enim agitandis, populorum mores variasque fortunæ vices, ex quibus leges oriuntur, contemplari simul solemus." B.

[2] Virg. *Æn.* iii. 461–2, slightly altered.

"TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON.

"Auchinleck, Nov. 6, 1766.

"MUCH ESTEEMED AND DEAR SIR,

"I PLEAD not guilty to [1] * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

"Having thus, I hope, cleared myself of the charge brought against me, I presume you will not be displeased if I escape the punishment which you have decreed for me unheard. If you have discharged the arrows of criticism against an innocent man, you must rejoice to find they have missed him, or have not been pointed so as to wound him.

"To talk no longer in allegory, I am, with all deference, going to offer a few observations in defence of my Latin, which you have found fault with.

"You think I should have used *spei primæ*, instead of *spei alteræ*. *Spes* is, indeed, often used to express something on which we have a future dependence, as in Virg. *Ecl.* i. 14,

'————modo namque gemellos,
Spem gregis, ah! silice in nuda connixa reliquit.'

and in *Georg.* iii. 473,

'*Spemque* gregemque simul,'

for the lambs and the sheep. Yet it is also used to express any thing on which we have a present dependance, and is well applied to a man of distinguished influence,—our support, our refuge, our *præsidium*, as Horace calls Mæcenas. So, in *Æneid*, xii. 57, Queen Amata addresses her son-in-law, Turnus:—'Spes *tu nunc una:*' and he was then no future hope, for she adds,

'————decus imperiumque Latini
Te penes.'

which might have been said of my Lord Bute some years ago. Now I consider the present Earl of Bute to be '*Excelsæ familiæ de Bute* spes prima;' and my Lord Mountstuart, as his eldest son, to be '*spes altera*.' So in *Æneid*, xii. 168, after having mentioned 'Pater Æneas,' who was the *present* 'spes,' the *reigning* 'spes,' as my German friends would say, the *spes prima*, the poet adds,

'Et juxta Ascanius, magnæ *spes altera* Romæ.'

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[1] The passage omitted explained the transaction to which the preceding letter had alluded. B.

"You think *alteræ* ungrammatical, and you tell me it should have been *alteri*. You must recollect, that in old times *alter* was declined regularly; and when the ancient fragments preserved in the *Juris Civilis Fontes* were written, it was certainly declined in the way that I use it. This, I should think, may protect a lawyer who writes *alteræ* in a dissertation upon part of his own science. But as I could hardly venture to quote fragments of old law to so classical a man as Mr. Johnson, I have not made an accurate search into these remains, to find examples of what I am able to produce in poetical composition. We find in Plaut. *Rudens*, III. iv. 45,

'Nam huic *alteræ* patria quæ sit profecto nescio.'

Plautus is, to be sure, an old comic writer; but in the days of Scipio and Lælius, we find Terent. *Heautontim.* II. iii. 30,

'————hoc ipsa in itinere *alteræ*
Dum narrat, forte audivi.'

"You doubt my having authority for using *genus* absolutely, for what we call *family*, that is, for *illustrious extraction*. Now I take *genus* in Latin, to have much the same signification with *birth* in English; both in their primary meaning expressing simply descent, but both made to stand κατ' ἐξοχὴν, for noble descent. *Genus* is thus used in Hor. *Sat.* II. v. 8,

'Et *genus*, et virtus, nisi cum re, vilior alga est.'

And in *Epist.* I. vi. 37,

'Et *genus* et formam Regina pecunia donat.'

And in the celebrated contest between Ajax and Ulysses, Ovid's *Metamorph.* xiii. 140,

'Nam *genus*, et proavos, et quæ non fecimus ipsi,
Vix ea nostra voco.'

"*Homines, nullius, originis*, for *nullis orti majoribus*, or *nullo loco nati*, is, 'you are afraid, barbarous.'

"*Origo* is used to signify extraction, as in Virg. *Æneid*, i. 286,

'Nascetur pulcra Trojanus *origine* Cæsar.'

and in *Æneid*, x. 618,

'Ille tamen nostra deducit *origine* nomen.'

and as *nullus* is used for obscure, is it not in the genius of the Latin language to write *nullius originis*, for obscure extraction?

"I have defended myself as well as I could.

"Might I venture to differ from you with regard to the utility of vows? I am sensible that it would be very dangerous to make vows rashly, and without a due consideration. But I cannot help thinking that they may often be of great advantage to one of a variable judgment and irregular inclinations. I always remember a passage in one of your letters to our Italian friend Baretti; where talking of the monastic life, you say you do not wonder that serious men should put themselves under the protection of a religious order, when they have found how unable they are to take care of themselves. For my own part, without affecting to be a Socrates, I am sure I have a more than ordinary struggle to maintain with *the Evil Principle;* and all the methods I can devise are little enough to keep me tolerably steady in the paths of rectitude.

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"I am ever, with the highest veneration, your affectionate humble servant,

"JAMES BOSWELL."

It appears from Johnson's diary, that he was this year at Mr. Thrale's, from before Midsummer till after Michaelmas, and that he afterwards passed a month at Oxford. He had then contracted a great intimacy with Mr. Chambers of that University, afterward Sir Robert Chambers, one of the judges in India.

He published nothing this year in his own name; but the noble dedication * to the King, of Gwyn's "London and Westminster Improved," was written by him: and he furnished the preface, † and several of the pieces, which compose a volume of "Miscellanies" by Mrs. Anna Williams, the blind lady who had an asylum in his house. Of these, there are his "Epitaph on Philips;" * "Translation of a Latin Epitaph on Sir Thomas Hanmer;" † "Friendship, an Ode;" * and, "The Ant," * a paraphrase from the Proverbs, of which I have a copy in his own hand-writing; and, from internal evidence, I ascribe to him, "To Miss —— on her giving the Author a gold and silk net-work Purse of her own weaving;" †[1] and "The Happy Life." †—Most of the pieces of this volume have evidently received additions from his superior pen, par-

[1] See *ante*, p. 124.

ticularly "Verses to Mr. Richardson, on his Sir Charles Grandison;" "The Excursion;" "Reflections on a Grave digging in Westminster Abbey." There is in this collection a poem, "On the death of Stephen Grey, the Electrician;" * which, on reading it, appeared to me to be undoubtedly Johnson's. I asked Mrs. Williams whether it was not his. "Sir," said she, with some warmth, "I wrote that poem before I had the honour of Dr. Johnson's acquaintance." I, however, was so much impressed with my first notion, that I mentioned it to Johnson, repeating, at the same time, what Mrs. Williams said. His answer was, "It is true, sir, that she wrote it before she was acquainted with me; but she has not told you that I wrote it all over again, except two lines." "The Fountains," † a beautiful little fairy tale in prose, written with exquisite simplicity, is one of Johnson's productions; and I cannot withhold from Mrs. Thrale the praise of being the author of that admirable poem, "The Three Warnings."

He wrote this year a letter, not intended for publication, which has, perhaps, as strong marks of his sentiment and style, as any of his compositions. The original is in my possession. It is addressed to the late Mr. William Drummond, bookseller in Edinburgh, a gentleman of good family but small estate, who took arms for the House of Stuart in 1745; and during his concealment in London till the act of general pardon came out, obtained the acquaintance of Dr. Johnson, who justly esteemed him as a very worthy man. It seems, some of the members of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge had opposed the scheme of translating the Holy Scriptures into the Erse or Gælic language, from political considerations of the disadvantage of keeping up the distinction between the Highlanders and the other inhabitants of North Britain. Dr. Johnson being informed of this, I suppose by Mr. Drummond, wrote with a generous indignation as follows:

"TO MR. WILLIAM DRUMMOND.

"SIR,

"I DID not expect to hear that it could be, in an assembly convened for the propagation of Christian knowledge, a question whether any nation uninstructed in religion should receive instruction; or whether that instruction should be imparted to them by a translation of the holy books into their own language. If obedience to the will of GOD be necessary to happiness, and knowledge of his will be necessary to obedience, I know not how he that withholds this knowledge, or delays it, can be said to love his neighbour as himself. He, that voluntarily continues in ignorance, is guilty of all the crimes which ignorance produces; as to him that should extinguish the tapers of a light-house, might justly be imputed the calamities of shipwrecks. Christianity is the highest perfection of humanity; and as no man is good but as he wishes the good of others, no man can be good in the highest degree, who wishes not to others the largest measures of the greatest good. To omit for a year, or for a day, the most efficacious method of advancing Christianity, in compliance with any purposes that terminate on this side of the grave, is a crime of which I know not that the world has yet had an example, except in the practice of the planters of America, a race of mortals whom, I suppose, no other man wishes to resemble.

"The Papists have, indeed, denied to the laity the use of the Bible; but this prohibition, in few places now very rigorously enforced, is defended by arguments which have for their foundation the care of souls. To obscure, upon motives merely political, the light of revelation is a practice reserved for the reformed; and, surely, the blackest midnight of Popery is meridian sunshine to such a reformation. I am not very willing that any language should be totally extinguished. The similitude and derivation of languages afford the most indubitable proof of the traduction of nations and the genealogy of mankind. They add often physical certainty to historical evidence; and often supply the only evidence of ancient migrations, and of the revolutions of ages which left no written monuments behind them.

"Every man's opinions, at least his desires, are a little influenced by his favourite studies. My zeal for languages may seem, perhaps, rather over-heated, even to those by whom I desire to be well esteemed. To those who have nothing in their thoughts but trade or policy, present power, or present money, I should not think it necessary to defend my opinions; but with men of letters I would not unwillingly compound, by wishing the continuance of every language, however narrow in its extent, or however

incommodious for common purposes, till it is reposited in some version of a known book, that it may be always hereafter examined and compared with other languages, and then permitting its disuse. For this purpose the translation of the Bible is most to be desired. It is not certain that the same method will not preserve the Highland language, for the purposes of learning, and abolish it from daily use. When the Highlanders read the Bible, they will naturally wish to have its obscurities cleared, and to know the history, collateral or appendant. Knowledge always desires increase; it is like fire, which must first be kindled by some external agent, but which will afterward propagate itself. When they once desire to learn, they will naturally have recourse to the nearest language by which that desire can be gratified; and one will tell another that if he would attain knowledge, he must learn English.

"This speculation may, perhaps, be thought more subtle than the grossness of real life will easily admit. Let it, however, be remembered, that the efficacy of ignorance has long been tried, and has not produced the consequence expected. Let knowledge, therefore, take its turn; and let the patrons of privation stand awhile aside, and admit the operation of positive principles.

"You will be pleased, Sir, to assure the worthy man who is employed in the new translation,[1] that he has my wishes for his success; and if here or at Oxford I can be of any use, that I shall think it more than honour to promote his undertaking. I am sorry that I delayed so long to write. I am, Sir, your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"Johnson's Court, Fleet Street,
"Aug. 13, 1766."

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[1] The Rev. Mr. John Campbell, minister of the parish of Kippen near Stirling, who has lately favoured me with a long, intelligent, and very obliging letter upon this work, makes the following remark. "Dr. Johnson has alluded to the worthy man employed in the translation of the New Testament. Might not this have afforded you an opportunity of paying a proper tribute of respect to the memory of the Rev. Mr. James Stuart, late minister of Killin, distinguished by his eminent piety, learning, and taste? The amiable simplicity of his life, his warm benevolence, his indefatigable and successful exertions for civilizing and improving the parish of which he was minister for upwards of fifty years, entitle him to the gratitude of his country, and the veneration of all good men. It certainly would be a pity, if such a character should be permitted to sink into oblivion." B.

The opponents of this pious scheme being made ashamed of their conduct, the benevolent undertaking was allowed to go on.

The following letters, though not written till the year after, being chiefly upon the same subject, are here inserted.

"TO MR. WILLIAM DRUMMOND.

"DEAR SIR,

"THAT my letter should have had such effects as you mention, gives me great pleasure. I hope you do not flatter me by imputing to me more good than I have really done. Those whom my arguments have persuaded to change their opinion, shew such modesty and candour as deserve great praise.

"I hope the worthy translator goes diligently forward. He has a higher reward in prospect than any honours which this world can bestow. I wish I could be useful to him.

"The publication of my letter, if it could be of use in a cause to which all other causes are nothing, I should not prohibit. But first, I would have you to consider whether the publication will really do any good; next, whether by printing and distributing a very small number, you may not attain all that you propose; and, what perhaps I should have said first, whether the letter, which I do not now perfectly remember, be fit to be printed.

"If you can consult Dr. Robertson, to whom I am a little known, I shall be satisfied about the propriety of whatever he shall direct. If he thinks that it should be printed, I entreat him to revise it; there may, perhaps, be some negligent lines written, and whatever is amiss, he knows very well how to rectify.[1]

"Be pleased to let me know, from time to time, how this excellent design goes forward.

"Make my compliments to young Mr. Drummond, whom I hope you will live to see such as you desire him.

"I have not lately seen Mr. Elphinston, but believe him to be prosperous. I shall be glad to hear the same of you, for I am, Sir, your affectionate humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"Johnson's Court, Fleet Street,
"April 21, 1767."

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[1] This paragraph shews Johnson's real estimation of the character and abilities of the celebrated Scottish Historian, however lightly, in a moment of caprice, he may have spoken of his works. B.

"TO THE SAME.

"SIR,

"I RETURNED this week from the country, after an absence of near six months, and found your letter with many others, which I should have answered sooner, if I had sooner seen them.

"Dr. Robertson's opinion was surely right. Men should not be told of the faults which they have mended. I am glad the old language is taught, and honour the translator as a man whom GOD has distinguished by the high office of propagating his word.

"I must take the liberty of engaging you in an office of charity. Mrs. Heely, the wife of Mr. Heely, who had lately some office in your theatre, is my near relation, and now in great distress. They wrote me word of their situation some time ago, to which I returned them an answer which raised hopes of more than it is proper for me to give them. Their representation of their affairs I have discovered to be such as cannot be trusted; and at this distance, though their case requires haste, I know not how to act. She, or her daughters, may be heard of at Canongate Head. I must beg, sir, that you will inquire after them, and let me know what is to be done. I am willing to go to ten pounds, and will transmit you such a sum, if upon examination you find it likely to be of use. If they are in immediate want, advance them what you think proper. What I could do, I would do for the woman, having no great reason to pay much regard to Heely himself.[1]

"I believe you may receive some intelligence from Mrs. Baker, of the theatre, whose letter I received at the same time with yours; and to whom, if you see her, you will make my excuse for the seeming neglect of answering her.

"Whatever you advance within ten pounds shall be immediately returned to you, or paid as you shall order. I trust wholly to your judgment. I am, Sir, &c.

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"London, Johnson's Court, Fleet Street,
"Oct. 24, 1767."

Mr. Cuthbert Shaw,[2] alike distinguished by his genius, misfortunes, and misconduct, published this year a poem, called "The Race, by Mercurious Spur, Esq." in which he

[1] This is the person concerning whom Sir John Hawkins has thrown out very unwarrantable reflections both against Dr. Johnson and Mr. Francis Barber. B.

[2] See an account of him in the *European Magazine*, Jan. 1786. B.

whimsically made the living poets of England contend for pre-eminence of fame by running :

> "Prove by their heels the prowess of their head."

In this poem there was the following portrait of Johnson :

> "Here Johnson comes,—unblest with outward grace,
> His rigid morals stamp'd upon his face.
> While strong conceptions struggle in his brain ;
> (For even wit is brought to bed with pain :)
> To view him, porters with their loads would rest,
> And babes cling frighted to the nurse's breast.
> With looks convulsed he roars in pompous strain,
> And, like an angry lion, shakes his mane.
> The Nine, with terror struck, who ne'er had seen
> Aught human with so terrible a mien,
> Debating whether they should stay or run,
> Virtue steps forth, and claims him for her son.
> With gentle speech she warns him now to yield,
> Nor stain his glories in the doubtful field ;
> But wrapt in conscious worth, content sit down,
> Since Fame, resolv'd his various pleas to crown,
> Though forc'd his present claim to disavow,
> Had long reserv'd a chaplet for his brow.
> He bows, obeys ; for Time shall first expire,
> Ere Johnson stay, when Virtue bids retire."

The Honourable Thomas Hervey [1] and his lady having unhappily disagreed, and being about to separate, Johnson interfered as their friend, and wrote him a letter of expostulation, which I have not been able to find ; but the substance of it is ascertained by a letter to Johnson in answer to it, which Mr. Hervey printed. The occasion of this correspondence between Dr. Johnson and Mr. Hervey, was thus related to me by Mr. Beauclerk. "Tom Hervey had a great liking for Johnson, and in his will had left him a legacy of fifty pounds. One day he said to me,

[1] The Hon. Thomas Hervey (1698—1775) second son of John first Earl of Bristol, and brother of Johnson's early friend Henry Hervey. He married in 1744 Anne daughter of Francis Coughlan, Esq. According to Croker he was a clever, mischievous, and eccentric profligate, whom charity might perhaps call a madman.

'Johnson may want this money now, more than afterward. I have a mind to give it him directly. Will you be so good as to carry a fifty pound note from me to him?' This I positively refused to do, as he might, perhaps, have knocked me down for insulting him, and have afterward put the note in his pocket. But I said, if Hervey would write him a letter, and enclose a fifty pound note, I should take care to deliver it. He accordingly did write him a letter, mentioning that he was only paying a legacy a little sooner. To his letter he added, '*P.S. I am going to part with my wife.*' Johnson then wrote to him, saying nothing of the note, but remonstrating with him against parting with his wife."

When I mentioned to Johnson this story, in as delicate terms as I could, he told me that the fifty pound note was given to him by Mr. Hervey in consideration of his having written for him a pamphlet against Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, who, Mr. Hervey imagined, was the author of an attack upon him; but that it was afterwards discovered to be the work of a garreteer, who wrote "The Fool": the pamphlet therefore against Sir Charles was not printed.

In February, 1767, there happened one of the most remarkable incidents of Johnson's life, which gratified his monarchical enthusiasm, and which he loved to relate with all its circumstances, when requested by his friends. This was his being honoured by a private conversation with his Majesty, in the library at the Queen's house. He had frequently visited those splendid rooms and noble collection of books,[1] which he used to say was more numerous and

[1] Dr. Johnson had the honour of contributing his assistance towards the formation of this library; for I have read a long letter from him to Mr. Barnard, giving the most masterly instructions on the subject. I wished much to have gratified my readers with the perusal of this letter, and have reason to think that his Majesty would have been graciously pleased to permit its publication; but Mr. Barnard, to whom I applied, declined it, "on his own account." B. The letter may be read in Croker's edition (1860), p. 196. The Queen's house, bought by George III. in 1761 and settled on Queen Charlotte, stood on the site of Buckingham Palace.

curious than he supposed any person could have made in the time which the King had employed. Mr. Barnard, the librarian, took care that he should have every accommodation that could contribute to his ease and convenience, while indulging his literary taste in that place; so that he had here a very agreeable resource at leisure hours.

His Majesty having been informed of his occasional visits, was pleased to signify a desire that he should be told when Dr. Johnson came next to the library. Accordingly, the next time that Johnson did come, as soon as he was fairly engaged with a book, on which, while he sat by the fire, he seemed quite intent, Mr. Barnard stole round to the apartment where the King was, and, in obedience to his Majesty's commands, mentioned that Dr. Johnson was then in the library. His Majesty said he was at leisure, and would go to him; upon which Mr. Barnard took one of the candles that stood on the King's table, and lighted his Majesty through a suite of rooms, till they came to a private door into the library, of which his Majesty had the key. Being entered, Mr. Barnard stepped forward hastily to Dr. Johnson, who was still in a profound study, and whispered him, "Sir, here is the King." Johnson started up, and stood still. His Majesty approached him, and at once was courteously easy.[1]

[1] The particulars of this conversation I have been at great pains to collect with the utmost authenticity, from Dr. Johnson's own detail to myself: from Dr. Langton who was present when he gave an account of it to Dr. Joseph Warton, and several other friends at Sir Joshua Reynolds's; from Mr. Barnard; from the copy of a letter written by the late Mr. Strahan the printer to Bishop Warburton; and from a minute, the original of which is among the papers of the late Sir James Caldwell, and a copy of which was most obligingly obtained for me from his son Sir John Caldwell, by Sir Francis Lumm. To all these gentlemen I beg leave to make my grateful acknowledgements, and particularly to Sir Francis Lumm, who was pleased to take a great deal of trouble, and even had the minute laid before the King by Lord Caermarthen, now Duke of Leeds, then one of his Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State, who announced to Sir Francis the royal pleasure concerning it by a letter, in these words: "I have the

His Majesty began by observing, that he understood he came sometimes to the library; and then mentioned his having heard that the Doctor had been lately at Oxford, and asked him if he was not fond of going thither. To which Johnson answered, that he was indeed fond of going to Oxford sometimes, but was likewise glad to come back again. The King then asked him what they were doing at Oxford. Johnson answered, he could not much commend their diligence, but that in some respects they were mended, for they had put their press under better regulations, and were at that time printing Polybius. He was then asked whether there were better libraries at Oxford or Cambridge. He answered, he believed the Bodleian was larger than any they had at Cambridge; at the same time adding, "I hope, whether we have more books or not than they have at Cambridge, we shall make as good use of them as they do." Being asked whether All Souls or Christ Church library was the largest, he answered, "All Souls library is the largest we have, except the Bodleian." "Ay," said the King, "that is the public library."

His Majesty inquired if he was then writing any thing. He answered, he was not, for he had pretty well told the world what he knew, and must now read to acquire more knowledge. The King, as it should seem with a view to urge him to rely on his own stores as an original writer, and to continue his labours, then said, "I do not think you borrow much from any body." Johnson said, he thought he had already done his part as a writer. "I should have thought so too," said the King, "if you had not written so well."—Johnson observed to me, upon this, that "No man could have paid a handsomer compliment; and it was fit for a King to pay. It was decisive." When

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King's commands to assure you, Sir, how sensible his Majesty is of your attention in communicating the minute of conversation previous to its publication. As there appears no objection to your complying with Mr. Boswell's wishes on the subject, you are at full liberty to deliver it to that gentleman, to make such use of in his *Life of Dr. Johnson* as he may think proper." B.

asked by another friend, at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, whether he made any reply to this high compliment, he answered, "No, Sir. When the King had said it, it was to be so. It was not for me to bandy civilities with my Sovereign." Perhaps no man who had spent his whole life in courts could have shewn a more nice and dignified sense of true politeness, than Johnson did in this instance.

His Majesty having observed to him that he supposed he must have read a great deal; Johnson answered, that he thought more than he read; that he had read a great deal in the early part of his life, but having fallen into ill health, he had not been able to read much, compared with others: for instance, he said he had not read much, compared with Dr. Warburton. Upon which the King said, that he heard Dr. Warburton was a man of such general knowledge, that you could scarce talk with him on any subject on which he was not qualified to speak; and that his learning resembled Garrick's acting, in its universality.[1] His Majesty then talked of the controversy between Warburton and Lowth,[2] which he seemed to have read, and asked Johnson what he thought of it. Johnson answered, "Warburton has most general, most scholastic learning; Lowth is the more correct scholar. I do not know which of them calls names best." The King was

[1] The Reverend Mr. Strahan clearly recollects having been told by Johnson, that the King observed that Pope made Warburton a Bishop. "True, Sir," said Johnson, "but Warburton did more for Pope; he made him a Christian:" alluding, no doubt, to his ingenious comments on the *Essay on Man*. B. See the "Life of Pope" (*Lives of the Poets*).

[2] Robert Lowth (1710–87), educated at Winchester and New College. In 1741 he was appointed to the Chair of Poetry at Oxford, and during his tenure of that office he delivered his famous Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews, which were afterwards published both in England and on the Continent. In these he attempted to discover (in Milman's words) "the eternal truths of the Bible from their imaginative framework," and it was partly on this ground that Warburton joined issue with him. Lowth held in turn the bishoprics of St. David's, Oxford, and London.

pleased to say he was of the same opinion; adding, "You do not think then, Dr. Johnson, that there was much argument in the case." Johnson said, he did not think there was. "Why, truly," said the King, "when once it comes to calling names, argument is pretty well at an end."

His Majesty then asked him what he thought of Lord Lyttelton's history, which was then published. Johnson said, he thought his style pretty good, but that he had blamed Henry the Second rather too much. "Why," said the King, "they seldom do these things by halves." "No, Sir," answered Johnson, "not to Kings." But fearing to be misunderstood, he proceeded to explain himself, and immediately subjoined: "That for those who spoke worse of Kings than they deserved, he could find no excuse; but that he could more easily conceive how some might speak better of them than they deserved, without any ill intention; for, as Kings had much in their power to give, those who were favoured by them would frequently, from gratitude, exaggerate their praises: and as this proceeded from a good motive, it was certainly excusable, as far as error could be excusable."

The King then asked him what he thought of Dr. Hill.[1] Johnson answered, that he was an ingenious man, but had no veracity; and immediately mentioned, as an instance of it, an assertion of that writer, that he had seen objects magnified to a much greater degree by using three or four microscopes at a time than by using one. "Now," added Johnson, "every one acquainted with

[1] Dr., or Sir John Hill as he called himself on the strength of a Swedish order of knighthood, was a literary and medical quack who earned a considerable income in both capacities. He appears also to have turned actor at one time, but less successfully. Churchill gibbeted him in *The Rosciad*, and Garrick in the following epigram:

> "For physic and farces, his equal there scarce is;
> His farces are physic, his physic a farce is."

See *Curiosities of Literature*, p. 52, ed. 1866.

microscopes knows, that the more of them he looks through, the less the object will appear." "Why," replied the King, "this is not only telling an untruth, but telling it clumsily; for, if that be the case, every one who can look through a microscope will be able to detect him."

"I now," said Johnson to his friends, when relating what had passed, "began to consider that I was depreciating this man in the estimation of his Sovereign, and thought it was time for me to say something that might be more favourable." He added, therefore, that Dr. Hill was, notwithstanding, a very curious observer; and if he would have been contented to tell the world no more than he knew, he might have been a very considerable man, and needed not to have recourse to such mean expedients to raise his reputation.

The King then talked of literary journals, mentioned particularly the *Journal des Savans*, and asked Johnson if it was well done. Johnson said, it was formerly very well done, and gave some account of the persons who began it, and carried it on for some years; enlarging at the same time on the nature and use of such works. The King asked him if it was well done now. Johnson answered, he had no reason to think that it was. The King then asked him if there were any other literary journals published in this kingdom, except the "Monthly" and "Critical Reviews"; and on being answered there was no other, his Majesty asked which of them was the best: Johnson answered, that the "Monthly Review" was done with most care, the "Critical" upon the best principles; adding that the authors of the "Monthly Review" were enemies to the Church. This the King said he was sorry to hear.

The conversation next turned on the "Philosophical Transactions," when Johnson observed that they had now a better method of arranging their materials than formerly. "Ay," said the King, "they are obliged to Dr. Johnson for that;" for his Majesty had heard and remembered the circumstance, which Johnson himself had forgot.

His Majesty expressed a desire to have the literary biography of this country ably executed, and proposed to Dr. Johnson to undertake it. Johnson signified his readiness to comply with his Majesty's wishes.

During the whole of this interview, Johnson talked to his Majesty with profound respect, but still in his firm manly manner, with a sonorous voice, and never in that subdued tone which is commonly used at the levee and in the drawing-room. After the King withdrew, Johnson shewed himself highly pleased with his Majesty's coversation, and gracious behaviour. He said to Mr. Barnard, "Sir, they may talk of the King as they will; but he is the finest gentleman I have ever seen." And he afterward observed to Mr. Langton, "Sir, his manners are those of as fine a gentleman as we may suppose Lewis the Fourteenth or Charles the Second."

At Sir Joshua Reynolds's, where a circle of Johnson's friends was collected round him to hear his account of this memorable conversation, Dr. Joseph Warton, in his frank and lively manner, was very active in pressing him to mention the particulars. "Come now, Sir, this is an interesting matter; do favour us with it." Johnson, with great good humour, complied.

He told them, "I found his Majesty wished I should talk, and I made it my business to talk. I find it does a man good to be talked to by his Sovereign. In the first place, a man cannot be in a passion—" Here some question interrupted him, which is to be regretted, as he certainly would have pointed out and illustrated many circumstances of advantage, from being in a situation where the powers of the mind are at once excited to vigorous exertion, and tempered by reverential awe.

During all the time in which Dr. Johnson was employed in relating to the circle at Sir Joshua Reynolds's the particulars of what passed between the King and him, Dr. Goldsmith remained unmoved upon a sofa at some distance, affecting not to join in the least in the eager curiosity of the company. He assigned as a reason for his gloom and seeming inattention, that he apprehended

Johnson had relinquished his purpose of furnishing him with a Prologue to his play, with the hopes of which he had been flattered; but it was strongly suspected that he was fretting with chagrin and envy at the singular honour Dr. Johnson had lately enjoyed. At length, the frankness and simplicity of his natural character prevailed. He sprung from the sofa, advanced to Johnson, and in a kind of flutter, from imagining himself in the situation which he had just been hearing described, exclaimed, "Well, you acquitted yourself in this conversation better than I should have done; for I should have bowed and stammered through the whole of it."

I received no letter from Johnson this year; nor have I discovered any of the correspondence[1] he had, except the two letters to Mr. Drummond, which have been inserted, for the sake of connexion with that to the same gentleman in 1766. His diary affords no light as to his employment at this time. He passed three months at Lichfield: and I cannot omit an affecting and solemn scene there, as related by himself:

"Sunday, Oct. 18, 1767. Yesterday, Oct. 17, at about ten in the morning, I took my leave for ever of my dear old friend, Catharine Chambers, who came to live with my mother about 1724, and has been but little parted from us since. She buried my father, my brother, and my mother. She is now fifty-eight years old.

"I desired all to withdraw, then told her that we were to part for ever; that as Christians, we should part with prayer; and that I would, if she was willing, say a short prayer beside her. She expressed great desire to hear me; and held up her poor hands, as she lay in bed, with great fervour, while I prayed, kneeling by her, nearly in the following words:

"Almighty and most merciful Father, whose loving-kindness is

[1] It is proper here to mention, that when I speak of his correspondence, I consider it independent of the voluminous collection of letters which, in the course of many years, he wrote to Mrs. Thrale, which forms a separate part of his works; and as a proof of the high estimation set on any thing which came from his pen, was sold by that lady for the sum of five hundred pounds. B.

over all thy works, behold, visit, and relieve this thy servant, who is grieved with sickness. Grant that the sense of her weakness may add strength to her faith, and seriousness to her repentance. And grant that by the help of thy Holy Spirit, after the pains and labours of this short life, we may all obtain everlasting happiness, through JESUS CHRIST our Lord, for whose sake hear our prayers. Amen. Our father, &c.

"I then kissed her. She told me, that to part was the greatest pain that she had ever felt, and that she hoped we should meet again in a better place. I expressed, with swelled eyes, and great emotion of tenderness, the same hopes. We kissed, and parted. I humbly hope to meet again, and to part no more" (*Pr. and Med.* pp. 77–8).

By those who have been taught to look upon Johnson as a man of a harsh and stern character, let this tender and affectionate scene be candidly read; and let them then judge whether more warmth of heart, and grateful kindness, is often found in human nature.

We have the following notice in his devotional record:

"August 2, 1767. I have been disturbed and unsettled for a long time, and have been without resolution to apply to study or to business, being hindered by sudden snatches."[1]

He, however, furnished Mr. Adams with a dedication* to the King of that ingenious gentleman's "Treatise on the Globes," conceived and expressed in such a manner as could not fail to be very grateful to a monarch distinguished for his love of the sciences.

This year was published a ridicule of his style, under the title of "Lexiphanes." Sir John Hawkins ascribes it to Dr. Kenrick; but its author was one Campbell, a Scotch purser in the navy. The ridicule consisted in applying Johnson's "words of large meaning" to insignificant matters, as if one should put the armour of Goliath upon a dwarf. The contrast might be laughable;

[1] *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 73. B. A few days later he notes in the same record: "By abstinence from wine and suppers I obtained sudden and great relief, and had freedom of mind restored to me, which I have wanted for all this year, without being able to find any means of obtaining it."

but the dignity of the armour must remain the same in all considerate minds. This malicious drollery, therefore, it may easily be supposed, could do no harm to its illustrious object.

"TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ. AT MR. ROTHWELL'S, PERFUMER, IN NEW BOND STREET, LONDON.

"DEAR SIR,

"THAT you have been all summer in London is one more reason for which I regret my long stay in the country. I hope that you will not leave the town before my return. We have here only the chance of vacancies in the passing carriages, and I have bespoken one that may, if it happens, bring me to town on the fourteenth of this month: but this is not certain.

"It will be a favour if you communicate this to Mrs. Williams: I long to see all my friends. I am, dear Sir, your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"Lichfield, Oct. 10, 1767."

It appears from his notes of the state of his mind (*Pr. and Med.* 81), that he suffered great perturbation and distraction in 1768. Nothing of his writing was given to the public this year, except the prologue * to his friend Goldsmith's comedy of "The Good-natured Man." The first lines of this prologue are strongly characteristical of the dismal gloom of his mind; which in his case, as in the case of all who are distressed with the same malady of imagination, transfers to others its own feelings. Who could suppose it was to introduce a comedy, when Mr. Bensley solemnly began,

> "Press'd by the load of life, the weary mind
> Surveys the general toil of human kind."

But this dark ground might make Goldsmith's humour shine the more.

In the spring of this year, having published my "Account of Corsica, with the Journal of a Tour to that Island," I returned to London, very desirous to see Dr. Johnson, and hear him upon the subject. I found he

was at Oxford, with his friend Mr. Chambers, who was now Vinerian Professor, and lived in New Inn Hall. Having had no letter from him since that in which he criticised the Latinity of my Thesis, and having been told by somebody that he was offended at my having put into my book an extract of his letter to me at Paris, I was impatient to be with him, and therefore followed him to Oxford, where I was entertained by Mr. Chambers, with a civility which I shall ever gratefully remember. I found that Dr. Johnson had sent a letter to me to Scotland, and that I had nothing to complain of but his being more indifferent to my anxiety than I wished him to be. Instead of giving, with the circumstances of time and place, such fragments of his conversation as I preserved during this visit to Oxford, I shall throw them together in continuation.

I asked him whether, as a moralist, he did not think that the practice of the law, in some degree, hurt the nice feeling of honesty. JOHNSON: "Why no, Sir, if you act properly. You are not to deceive your clients with false representations of your opinion: you are not to tell lies to a judge." BOSWELL: "But what do you think of supporting a cause which you know to be bad?" JOHNSON: "Sir, you do not know it to be good or bad till the judge determines it. I have said that you are to state facts fairly; so that your thinking, or what you call knowing, a cause to be bad, must be from reasoning, must be from your supposing your arguments to be weak and inconclusive. But, Sir, that is not enough. An argument which does not convince yourself, may convince the judge to whom you urge it: and if it does convince him, why, then, Sir, you are wrong, and he is right. It is his business to judge; and you are not to be confident in your own opinion that a cause is bad, but to say all you can for your client, and then hear the judge's opinion." BOSWELL: "But, Sir, does not affecting a warmth when you have no warmth, and appearing to be clearly of one opinion when you are in reality of another opinion, does not such dissimulation impair one's honesty? Is there

not some danger that a lawyer may put on the same mask in common life, in the intercourse with his friends?" JOHNSON: "Why no, Sir. Everybody knows you are paid for affecting warmth for your client; and it is, therefore, properly no dissimulation: the moment you come from the bar you resume your usual behaviour. Sir, a man will no more carry the artifice of the bar into the common intercourse of society, than a man who is paid for tumbling upon his hands will continue to tumble upon his hands when he should walk on his feet."

Talking of some of the modern plays, he said, "False Delicacy" was totally void of character.[1] He praised Goldsmith's "Good-natured Man"; said, it was the best comedy that had appeared since "The Provoked Husband,"[2] and that there had not been of late any such character exhibited on the stage as that of Croaker. I observed it was the Suspirius of his "Rambler." He said, Goldsmith had owned he had borrowed it from thence. "Sir," continued he, "there is all the difference in the world between characters of nature and characters of manners; and *there* is the difference between the characters of Fielding and those of Richardson. Characters of manners are very entertaining; but they are to be understood by a more superficial observer than characters of nature, where a man must dive into the recesses of the human heart."

It always appeared to me that he estimated the compositions of Richardson too highly, and that he had an unreasonable prejudice against Fielding. In comparing

[1] *False Delicacy*, by Hugh Kelly the poetical stay-maker, was brought out by Garrick at Drury Lane six nights before Colman produced *The Good-Natured Man* at Covent Garden. Garrick, who wrote both prologue and epilogue for it, described it as a sermon in five acts. It was the incarnation of the Sentimental Comedy. Nevertheless it was extremely successful, both on the stage and in print; ten thousand copies of it were sold before the season closed, and translations of it were published in French, German, and Portuguese.

[2] Begun by Sir John Vanbrugh and finished by Colley Cibber. Sir Francis Wronghead is a character in the play.

those two writers, he used this expression: "That there was as great a difference between them as between a man who knew how a watch was made, and a man who could tell the hour by looking on the dial-plate." This was a short and figurative state of his distinction between drawing characters of nature and characters only of manners. But I cannot help being of opinion, that the neat watches of Fielding are as well constructed as the large clocks of Richardson, and that his dial-plates are brighter. Fielding's characters, though they do not expand themselves so widely in dissertation, are as just pictures of human nature, and I will venture to say, have more striking features, and nicer touches of the pencil; and though Johnson used to quote with approbation a saying of Richardson's, "that the virtues of Fielding's heroes were the vices of a truly good man," I will venture to add, that the moral tendency of Fielding's writings, though it does not encourage a strained and rarely possible virtue, is ever favourable to honour and honesty, and cherishes the benevolent and generous affections. He who is as good as Fielding would make him, is an amiable member of society, and may be led on by more regulated instructors to a higher state of ethical perfection.

Johnson proceeded: "Even Sir Francis Wronghead is a character of manners, though drawn with great humour." He then repeated, very happily, all Sir Francis's credulous account to Manly of his being with "the great man," and securing a place. I asked him, if "The Suspicious Husband"[1] did not furnish a well-drawn character, that of Ranger. JOHNSON: "No, Sir; Ranger is just a rake, a mere rake, and a lively young fellow, but no *character*."

The great Douglas Cause was at this time a very general subject of discussion.[2] I found he had not studied

[1] By Dr. Benjamin Hoadley, son of the Bishop, first acted in 1747. Garrick's performance of Ranger drew all the town, and the King was so pleased with the piece that he sent the author £100.—*Wright.*

[2] The point at issue in this famous case turned on the filiation of Archibald Douglas who, on the death of the third Marquis and

it with much attention, but had only heard parts of it occasionally. He, however, talked of it, and said, "I am of opinion that positive proof of fraud should not be required of the plaintiff, but that the judges should decide according as probability shall appear to preponderate, granting to the defendant the presumption of filiation to be strong in his favour. And I think too, that a good deal of weight should be allowed to the dying declarations, because they were spontaneous. There is a great difference between what is said without our being urged to it, and what is said from a kind of compulsion. If I praise a man's book without being asked my opinion of it, that is honest praise, to which one may trust. But if an author asks me if I like his book, and I give him something like praise, it must not be taken as my real opinion.

"I have not been troubled for a long time with authors desiring my opinion of their works. I used once to be sadly plagued with a man who wrote verses, but who literally had no other notion of a verse, but that it consisted of ten syllables. *Lay your knife and your fork across your plate*, was to him a verse.

Lay yōur knife ānd your fōrk acrōss your plāte.

As he wrote a great number of verses, he sometimes by chance made good ones, though he did not know it."

He renewed his promise of coming to Scotland, and

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first Duke of Douglas without issue, claimed the great Douglas estates through his mother Lady Jane, wife of Sir John Stewart Douglas and only child of the second Marquis. The claim was disputed by the guardians of the Duke of Hamilton (heir male of the Duke of Douglas and a minor) on the ground that the claimant was a supposititious child. Judgment was given in their favour by the Scottish Court of Session, but only by the casting vote of the President, and the decision was subsequently reversed in the House of Lords. Thereupon the Edinburgh mob broke the windows of the judges who had voted for the defendants, and it was whispered that Boswell, who was one of the claimant's counsel, headed the attack on his own father's house. Many allusions to this celebrated trial will be found in the course of the biography and also in the *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*.

going with me to the Hebrides, but said he would now content himself with seeing one or two of the most curious of them. He said, "Macaulay,[1] who writes the account of St. Kilda, set out with a prejudice against prejudice, and wanted to be a smart modern thinker; and yet he affirms for a truth, that when a ship arrives there all the inhabitants are seized with a cold."

Dr. John Campbell, the celebrated writer, took a great deal of pains to ascertain this fact, and attempted to account for it on physical principles, from the effect of effluvia from human bodies. Johnson, at another time, praised Macaulay for his "*magnanimity*," in asserting this wonderful story, because it was well attested. A lady of Norfolk, by a letter to my friend Dr. Burney, has favoured me with the following solution:

"Now for the explication of this seeming mystery, which is so very obvious as, for that reason, to have escaped the penetration of Dr. Johnson and his friend, as well as that of the author. Reading the book with my ingenious friend, the late Reverend Mr. Christian of Docking—after ruminating a little, 'The cause,' says he, 'is a natural one. The situation of St. Kilda renders a north-east wind indispensably necessary before a stranger can land. The wind, not the stranger, occasions an epidemic cold.' If I am not mistaken, Mr. Macaulay is dead; if living, this solution might please him, as I hope it will Mr. Boswell, in return for the many agreeable hours his works have afforded us."

Johnson expatiated on the advantages of Oxford for learning. "There is here, Sir," said he, "such a progressive emulation. The students are anxious to appear well to their tutors; the tutors are anxious to have their pupils appear well in the college; the colleges are anxious to have their students appear well in the University; and there are excellent rules of discipline in every college. That the rules are sometimes ill observed, may be true; but is nothing against the system. The members of a University may, for a season, be unmindful of their duty. I am arguing for the excellency of the institution."

[1] Rev. Kenneth Macaulay, great-uncle of Lord Macaulay.

Of Guthrie, he said, "Sir, he is a man of parts. He has no great regular fund of knowledge; but by reading so long, and writing so long, he no doubt has picked up a good deal."

He said he had lately been a long while at Lichfield, but had grown very weary before he left it. BOSWELL: "I wonder at that, Sir; it is your native place." JOHNSON: "Why so is Scotland *your* native place."

His prejudice against Scotland appeared remarkably strong at this time. When I talked of our advancement in literature, "Sir," said he, "you have learnt a little from us, and you think yourselves very great men. Hume would never have written history, had not Voltaire written it before him. He is an echo of Voltaire." BOSWELL: "But, Sir, we have Lord Kames." JOHNSON: "You *have* Lord Kames. Keep him; ha, ha, ha! We don't envy you him. Do you ever see Dr. Robertson?" BOSWELL: "Yes, Sir." JOHNSON: "Does the dog talk of me?" BOSWELL: "Indeed, Sir, he does, and loves you." Thinking that I now had him in a corner, and being solicitous for the literary fame of my country, I pressed him for his opinion on the merit of Dr. Robertson's History of Scotland. But, to my surprise, he escaped.—"Sir, I love Robertson, and I won't talk of his book."

It is but justice both to him and Dr. Robertson to add, that though he indulged himself in this sally of wit, he had too good taste not to be fully sensible of the merits of that admirable work.

An essay, written by Mr. Deane, a divine of the Church of England, maintaining the future life of brutes by an explication of certain parts of the Scriptures, was mentioned, and the doctrine insisted on by a gentleman who seemed fond of curious speculation. Johnson, who did not like to hear of any thing concerning a future state which was not authorized by the regular canons of orthodoxy, discouraged this talk; and being offended at its continuation, he watched an opportunity to give the gentleman a blow of reprehension. So, when the poor speculatist, with a serious metaphysical pensive face,

addressed him, "But really, Sir, when we see a very sensible dog, we don't know what to think of him." Johnson, rolling with joy at the thought which beamed in his eye, turned quickly round, and replied, "True, Sir: and when we see a very foolish *fellow*, we don't know what to think of *him*." He then rose up, strided to the fire, and stood for some time laughing and exulting.[1]

I told him that I had several times, when in Italy, seen the experiment of placing a scorpion within a circle of burning coals; that it ran round and round in extreme pain; and finding no way to escape retired to the centre, and like a true Stoic philosopher, darted its sting into its head, and thus at once freed itself from its woes. "*This must end 'em.*"[2] I said, this was a curious fact, as it shewed deliberate suicide in a reptile. Johnson would not admit the fact. He said, Maupertuis[3] was of opinion that it does not kill itself, but dies of the heat; that it gets to the centre of the circle, as the coolest place; that its turning its tail in upon its head is merely a convulsion, and that it does not sting itself. He said he would be satisfied if the great anatomist Morgagni, after dissecting a scorpion on which the experiment had been tried, should certify that its sting had penetrated into its head.

[1] The "poor speculatist" was of course Boswell himself.

[2] Addison's *Cato* v. i.

[3] I should think it impossible not to wonder at the variety of Johnson's reading, however desultory it might have been. Who could have imagined that the High Church of England man would be so prompt in quoting Maupertuis, who, I am sorry to think, stands in the list of those unfortunate mistaken men who call themselves *esprits forts*. I have, however, a high respect for that philosopher whom the Great Frederick of Prussia loved and honoured, and addressed pathetically in one of his poems,

"*Maupertuis, cher Maupertuis,*
Que notre vie est peu de chose!"

There was in Maupertuis a vigour and yet a tenderness of sentiment, united with strong intellectual powers, and uncommon ardour of soul. Would he had been a Christian! I cannot help earnestly venturing to hope that he is one now. B.

He seemed pleased to talk of natural philosophy. "That woodcocks," said he, "fly over the northern countries, is proved, because they have been observed at sea. Swallows certainly sleep all the winter. A number of them conglobulate together, by flying round and round, and then all in a heap throw themselves under water, and lie in the bed of a river." He told us, one of his first essays was a Latin poem upon the glowworm; I am sorry I did not ask where it was to be found.

Talking of the Russians and the Chinese, he advised me to read Bell's "Travels."[1] I asked him whether I should read Du Halde's Account of China.[2] "Why, yes," said he, "as one reads such a book; that is to say, consult it."

He talked of the heinousness of the crime of adultery, by which the peace of families was destroyed. He said, "Confusion of progeny constitutes the essence of the crime; and therefore a woman who breaks her marriage vows is much more criminal than a man who does it. A man, to be sure, is criminal in the sight of God; but he does not do his wife a material injury, if he does not insult her; if, for instance, from mere wantonness of appetite, he steals privately to her chambermaid. Sir, a wife ought not greatly to resent this. I would not receive home a daughter who had run away from her husband on that account. A wife should study to reclaim her husband by more attention to please him. Sir, a man will not, once in a hundred instances, leave his wife and go to a harlot, if his wife has not been negligent of pleasing."

Here he discovered that acute discrimination, that solid judgment, and that knowledge of human nature, for which he was upon all occasions remarkable. Taking care to keep in view the moral and religious duty, as understood in our nation, he shewed clearly from reason and good sense, the greater degree of culpability in the one sex

[1] *Travels from St. Petersburg in Russia to divers Parts of Asia*; by John Bell, Glasgow, 1763.

[2] In *The Curiosities of Literature* (p. 50, ed. 1866) Du Halde is said never to have travelled ten leagues from Paris in his life, and to have compiled his book from the accounts of missionaries.

deviating from it than the other; and, at the same time, inculcated a very useful lesson as to *the way to keep him*.

I asked him if it was not hard that one deviation from chastity should so absolutely ruin a young woman. JOHNSON: "Why no, Sir; it is the great principle which she is taught. When she has given up that principle, she has given up every notion of female honour and virtue, which are all included in chastity."

A gentleman talked to him of a lady whom he greatly admired and wished to marry, but was afraid of her superiority of talents.[1] "Sir," said he, "you need not be afraid; marry her. Before a year goes about, you'll find that reason much weaker, and that wit not so bright." Yet the gentleman may be justified in his apprehension by one of Dr. Johnson's admirable sentences in his life of Waller: "He doubtless praised some whom he would have been afraid to marry; and, perhaps, married one whom he would have been ashamed to praise. Many qualities contribute to domestic happiness, upon which poetry has no colours to bestow: and many airs and sallies may delight imagination, which he who flatters them never can approve."

He praised Signor Baretti. "His account of Italy is a very entertaining book; and, Sir, I know no man who carries his head higher in conversation than Baretti. There are strong powers in his mind. He has not, indeed, many hooks; but with what hooks he has, he grapples very forcibly."

At this time I observed upon the dial-plate of his watch a short Greek inscription, taken from the New Testament, Νὺξ γὰρ ἔρχεται, being the first words of our SAVIOUR's solemn admonition to the improvement of that time which is allowed us to prepare for eternity; "The night cometh when no man can work."[2] He

[1] The lady at this time in Boswell's thoughts seems, from his letters to Temple, to have been a Dutch-woman who was translating his *Tour in Corsica* into French. *Dr. Hill.*

[2] Sir Walter Scott put the same words on a sun-dial in his garden at Abbotsford.

some time afterwards laid aside this dial-plate; and when I asked him the reason, he said, "It might do very well upon a clock which a man keeps in his closet; but to have it upon his watch which he carries about with him, and which is often looked at by others, might be censured as ostentatious." Mr. Steevens is now possessed of the dial-plate inscribed as above.

He remained at Oxford a considerable time; I was obliged to go to London, where I received his letter, which had been returned from Scotland.

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"MY DEAR BOSWELL,

"I HAVE omitted a long time to write to you, without knowing very well why. I could not tell why I should not write; for who would write to men who publish the letters of their friends, without their leave?[1] Yet I write to you in spite of my caution, to tell you that I shall be glad to see you, and that I wish you would empty your head of Corsica, which I think has filled it rather too long. But, at all events, I shall be glad, very glad, to see you. I am, Sir, yours affectionately,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"Oxford, March 23, 1768."

I answered thus:

"TO MR. SAMUEL JOHNSON.

"London, 26th April, 1768.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I HAVE received your last letter, which, though very short, and by no means complimentary, yet gave me real pleasure, because it contains these words, 'I shall be glad, very glad to see you.'—Surely you have no reason to complain of my publishing a single paragraph of one of your letters; the temptation to it was so strong. An irrevocable grant of your friendship, and your dignifying my desire of visiting Corsica with the epithet of 'a

[1] In his *Journal of a Tour in Corsica* Boswell had printed the second and third paragraphs of Johnson's letter of January 14th, 1766. *Dr Hill.*

wise and noble curiosity,' are to me more valuable than many of the grants of kings.

"But how can you bid me 'empty my head of Corsica'? My noble-minded friend, do you not feel for an oppressed nation bravely struggling to be free? Consider fairly what is the case. The Corsicans never received any kindness from the Genoese. They never agreed to be subject to them. They owe them nothing, and when reduced to an abject state of slavery by force, shall they not rise in the great cause of liberty, and break the galling yoke? And shall not every liberal soul be warm for them? Empty my head of Corsica! Empty it of honour, empty it of humanity, empty it of friendship, empty it of piety. No! while I live, Corsica and the cause of the brave islanders shall ever employ much of my attention, shall ever interest me in the sincerest manner.

* * * * * * *

"I am, &c.
"JAMES BOSWELL."

Upon his arrival in London in May, he surprised me one morning with a visit at my lodging in Half-Moon Street, was quite satisfied with my explanation, and was in the kindest and most agreeable frame of mind. As he had objected to a part of one of his letters being published, I thought it right to take this opportunity of asking him explicitly whether it would be improper to publish his letters after his death. His answer was, "Nay, Sir, when I am dead, you may do as you will."

He talked in his usual style with a rough contempt of popular liberty. "They make a rout about *universal* liberty, without considering that all that is to be valued, or indeed can be enjoyed by individuals, is *private* liberty. Political liberty is good only so far as it produces private liberty. Now, Sir, there is the liberty of the press, which you know is a constant topic. Suppose you and I and two hundred more were restrained from printing our thoughts: what then? What proportion would that restraint upon us bear to the private happiness of the nation?"

This mode of representing the inconveniences of restraint as light and insignificant, was a kind of sophistry in which he delighted to indulge himself, in opposition to the extreme laxity for which it has been fashionable for

too many to argue, when it is evident, upon reflection, that the very essence of government is restraint; and certain it is, that as government produces rational happiness, too much restraint is better than too little. But when restraint is unnecessary, and so close as to gall those who are subject to it, the people may and ought to remonstrate; and, if relief is not granted, to resist. Of this manly and spirited principle, no man was more convinced than Johnson himself.

About this time Dr. Kenrick attacked him, through my sides, in a pamphlet, entitled "An Epistle to James Boswell, Esq. occasioned by his having transmitted the moral Writings of Dr. Samuel Johnson to Pascal Paoli, General of the Corsicans." I was at first inclined to answer this pamphlet; but Johnson, who knew that my doing so would only gratify Kenrick, by keeping alive what would soon die away of itself, would not suffer me to take any notice of it.

His sincere regard for Francis Barber, his faithful negro servant, made him so desirous of his farther improvement, that he now placed him at a school at Bishop Stortford, in Hertfordshire.[1] This humane attention does Johnson's heart much honour. Out of many letters which Mr. Barber received from his master, he has preserved three, which he kindly gave me, and which I shall insert according to their dates.

"TO MR. FRANCIS BARBER.

"DEAR FRANCIS,

"I HAVE been very much out of order. I am glad to hear that you are well, and design to come soon to you. I would have you stay at Mrs. Clapp's for the present, till I can determine what we shall do. Be a good boy.

"My compliments to Mrs. Clapp and to Mr. Fowler. I am, yours affectionately,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"May 28, 1768."

[1] Barber was then twenty-five years old.

Soon afterwards, he supped at the Crown and Anchor tavern, in the Strand, with a company whom I collected to meet him. They were Dr. Percy, now Bishop of Dromore, Dr. Douglas, now Bishop of Salisbury, Mr. Langton, Dr. Robertson the historian, Dr. Hugh Blair, and Mr. Thomas Davies, who wished much to be introduced to these eminent Scotch *literati;* but on the present occasion he had very little opportunity of hearing them talk, for with an excess of prudence, for which Johnson afterwards found fault with them, they hardly opened their lips, and that only to say something which they were certain would not expose them to the sword of Goliath; such was their anxiety for their fame when in the presence of Johnson. He was this evening in remarkable vigour of mind, and eager to exert himself in conversation, which he did with great readiness and fluency; but I am sorry to find that I have preserved but a small part of what passed.

He allowed high praise to Thomson as a poet; but when one of the company said he was also a very good man, our moralist contested this with great warmth, accusing him of gross sensuality and licentiousness of manners. I was very much afraid that in writing Thomson's life, Dr. Johnson would have treated his private character with a stern severity, but I was agreeably disappointed; and I may claim a little merit in it, from my having been at pains to send him authentic accounts of the affectionate and generous conduct of that poet to his sisters, one of whom, the wife of Mr. Thomson, schoolmaster at Lanark, I knew, and was presented by her with three of his letters, one of which Dr. Johnson has inserted in his life.

He was vehement against old Dr. Mounsey,[1] of Chelsea College, as "a fellow who swore and talked bawdy." "I have been often in his company," said Dr. Percy, "and

[1] Messenger Mounsey, M.D., died at his apartments in Chelsea College, Dec. 26, 1788, at the great age of ninety-five. An extraordinary direction in his will may be found in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 50, pt. ii. p. 1183. *Malone.*

never heard him swear or talk bawdy." Mr. Davies, who sat next to Dr. Percy, having after this had some conversation aside with him, made a discovery which, in his zeal to pay court to Dr. Johnson, he eagerly proclaimed aloud from the foot of the table: "Oh, Sir, I have found out a very good reason why Dr. Percy never heard Mounsey swear or talk bawdy, for he tells me he never saw him but at the Duke of Northumberland's table." "And so, Sir," said Dr. Johnson loudly to Dr. Percy, "you would shield this man from the charge of swearing and talking bawdy, because he did not do so at the Duke of Northumberland's table. Sir, you might as well tell us that you had seen him hold up his hand at the Old Bailey, and he neither swore nor talked bawdy; or that you had seen him in the cart at Tyburn, and he neither swore nor talked bawdy. And is it thus, Sir, that you presume to controvert what I have related?" Dr. Johnson's animadversion was uttered in such a manner, that Dr. Percy seemed to be displeased, and soon afterwards left the company, of which Johnson did not at that time take any notice.

Swift having been mentioned, Johnson, as usual, treated him with little respect as an author. Some of us endeavoured to support the Dean of St. Patrick's by various arguments. One in particular praised his "Conduct of the Allies." JOHNSON: "Sir, his 'Conduct of the Allies' is a performance of very little ability." "Surely, Sir," said Dr. Douglas, "you must allow it has strong facts." [1] JOHNSON: "Why, yes, Sir; but what is that to the merit

[1] My respected friend, upon reading this passage, observed, that he probably must have said not simply "strong facts," but "strong facts well arranged." His Lordship, however, knows too well the value of written documents to insist on setting his recollection against my notes taken at the time. He does not attempt to *traverse the record*. The fact, perhaps, may have been, either that the additional words escaped me in the noise of a numerous company, or that Dr. Johnson, from his impetuosity, and eagerness to seize an opportunity to make a lively retort, did not allow Dr. Douglas to finish his sentence. B.

of the composition? In the Sessions-paper of the Old Bailey there are strong facts. House-breaking is a strong fact; robbery is a strong fact; and murder is a *mighty* strong fact: but is great praise due to the historian of those strong facts? No, Sir, Swift has told what he had to tell distinctly enough, but that is all. He had to count ten, and he has counted it right."—Then recollecting that Mr. Davies, by acting as an *informer*, had been the occasion of his talking somewhat too harshly to his friend Dr. Percy, for which, probably, when the first ebullition was over, he felt some compunction, he took an opportunity to give him a hit: so added, with a preparatory laugh, "Why, Sir, Tom Davies might have written 'The Conduct of the Allies.'" Poor Tom being thus suddenly dragged into ludicrous notice in presence of the Scottish Doctors, to whom he was ambitious of appearing to advantage, was grievously mortified. Nor did his punishment rest here; for upon subsequent occasions, whenever he, "statesman all over,"[1] assumed a strutting importance, I used to hail him—"*the Author of 'The Conduct of the Allies.'*"

When I called upon Dr. Johnson next morning, I found him highly satisfied with his colloquial prowess the preceding evening. "Well," said he, "we had good talk." Boswell: "Yes, Sir; you tossed and gored several persons."

The late Alexander Earl of Eglinton, who loved wit more than wine, and men of genius more than sycophants, had a great admiration of Johnson; but from the remarkable elegance of his own manners, was, perhaps, too delicately sensible of the roughness which sometimes appeared in Johnson's behaviour. One evening about this time, when his Lordship did me the honour to sup at my lodgings with Dr. Robertson and several other men of literary distinction, he regretted that Johnson had not been educated with more refinement, and lived more in polished society. "No, no, my Lord," said Signor

[1] See the hard drawing of him in Churchill's *Rosciad*. B.

Baretti, "do with him what you would, he would always have been a bear." "True," answered the Earl, with a smile, "but he would have been a *dancing* bear."

To obviate all the reflections which have gone round the world to Johnson's prejudice, by applying to him the epithet of a *bear*, let me impress upon my readers a just and happy saying of my friend Goldsmith, who knew him well: "Johnson, to be sure, has a roughness in his manner; but no man alive has a more tender heart. *He has nothing of the bear but his skin.*"

In 1769, so far as I can discover, the public was favoured with nothing of Johnson's composition, either for himself or any of his friends. His "Meditations" too strongly prove that he suffered much both in body and mind; yet was he perpetually striving against *evil*, and nobly endeavouring to advance his intellectual and devotional improvement. Every generous and grateful heart must feel for the distresses of so eminent a benefactor to mankind; and now that his unhappiness is certainly known, must respect that dignity of character which prevented him from complaining.

His Majesty having the preceding year instituted the Royal Academy of Arts in London, Johnson had now the honour of being appointed Professor in Ancient Literature.[1] In the course of the year he wrote some letters to Mrs. Thrale, passed some part of the summer at Oxford and at Lichfield, and when at Oxford he wrote the following letter:

[1] In which place he has been succeeded by Bennet Langton, Esq. When that truly religious gentleman was elected to this honorary Professorship, at the same time that Edward Gibbon, Esq., noted for introducing a kind of sneering infidelity into his Historical Writings, was elected Professor in Ancient History, in the room of Dr. Goldsmith, I observed that it brought to my mind, "Wicked Will Whiston and good Mr. Ditton."—I am now also of that admirable institution as Secretary for Foreign Correspondence, by the favour of the Academicians, and the approbation of the Sovereign. B.

"TO THE REVEREND MR. THOMAS WARTON.

DEAR SIR,

"MANY years ago, when I used to read in the library of your College, I promised to recompense the college for that permission, by adding to their books a Baskerville's Virgil. I have now sent it, and desire you to reposit it on the shelves in my name.[1]

"If you will be pleased to let me know when you have an hour of leisure, I will drink tea with you. I am engaged for the afternoon to-morrow and on Friday: all my mornings are my own.[2]

"I am, &c.

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"May 31, 1769."

I came to London in the autumn, and having informed him that I was going to be married in a few months, I wished to have as much of his conversation as I could before engaging in a state of life which would probably keep me more in Scotland, and prevent me seeing him so often as when I was a single man; but I found he was at Brighthelmstone with Mr. and Mrs. Thrale. I was very sorry that I had not his company with me at the Jubilee, in honour of Shakespeare, at Stratford-upon-Avon, the great poet's native town.[3] Johnson's connection both with Shakespeare and Garrick founded a double claim to his presence; and it would have been

[1] It has this inscription in a blank-leaf; "*Hunc librum D.D. Samuel Johnson, eo quod hic loci studiis interdum vacaret.*" Of this library, which is an old Gothic room, he was very fond. On my observing to him that some of the *modern* libraries of the University were more commodious and pleasant for study, as being more spacious and airy, he replied, "Sir, if a man has a mind to *prance*, he must study at Christ Church and All Souls." *Warton.* B.

[2] During this visit he seldom or never dined out. He appeared to be deeply engaged in some literary work. Miss Williams was now with him at Oxford. *Warton.* B.

[3] It was on this occasion that Boswell made himself especially ridiculous by wearing the words *Corsica Boswell* in large letters on his hat.

highly gratifying to Mr. Garrick. Upon this occasion I particularly lamented that he had not that warmth of friendship for his brilliant pupil, which we may suppose would have had a benignant effect on both. When almost every man of eminence in the literary world was happy to partake in this festival of genius, the absence of Johnson could not but be wondered at and regretted. The only trace of him there, was in the whimsical advertisement of a haberdasher, who sold *Shakespearian ribands* of various dyes; and, by way of illustrating their appropriation to the bard, introduced a line from the celebrated prologue at the opening of Drury-lane theatre:

"Each change of *many-colour'd* life he drew."

From Brighthelmstone Dr. Johnson wrote me the following letter, which they who may think that I ought to have suppressed, must have less ardent feelings than I have always avowed:—[1]

[1] In the preface to my *Account of Corsica*, published in 1768, I thus express myself: "He who publishes a book affecting not to be an author, and professing an indifference for literary fame, may possibly impose upon many people such an idea of his consequence as he wishes may be received. For my part, I should be proud to be known as an author, and I have an ardent ambition for literary fame; for, of all possessions I should imagine literary fame to be the most valuable. A man who has been able to furnish a book, which has been approved by the world, has established himself as a respectable character in distant society, without any danger of having that character lessened by the observation of his weaknesses. To preserve a uniform dignity among those who see us every day, is hardly possible; and to aim at it, must put us under the fetters of perpetual restraint. The author of an approved book may allow his natural disposition an easy play, and yet indulge the pride of superior genius, when he considers that by those who know him only as an author, he never ceases to be respected. Such an author, when in his hours of gloom and discontent, may have the consolation to think, that his writings are, at that very time, giving pleasure to numbers; and such an author may cherish the hope of being remembered after death, which has been a great object to the noblest minds in all ages." B.

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"DEAR SIR,

"WHY do you charge me with unkindness? I have omitted nothing that could do you good, or give you pleasure, unless it be that I have forborne to tell you my opinion of your 'Account of Corsica.' I believe my opinion, if you think well of my judgment, might have given you pleasure; but when it is considered how much vanity is excited by praise, I am not sure that it would have done you good. Your History is like other histories, but your Journal is in a very high degree curious and delightful. There is between the history and the journal that difference which there will always be found between notions borrowed from without, and notions generated within. Your history was copied from books; your journal rose out of your own experience and observation. You express images which operated strongly upon yourself, and you have impressed them with great force upon your readers. I know not whether I could name any narrative by which curiosity is better excited, or better gratified.

"I am glad that you are going to be married; and as I wish you well in things of less importance, wish you well with proportionate ardour in this crisis of your life. What I can contribute to your happiness, I should be very unwilling to withhold; for I have always loved and valued you, and shall love you and value you still more, as you become more regular and useful: effects which a happy marriage will hardly fail to produce.

"I do not find that I am likely to come back very soon from this place. I shall, perhaps, stay a fortnight longer; and a fortnight is a long time to a lover absent from his mistress. Would a fortnight ever have an end? I am, dear Sir, your most affectionate humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"Brighthelmstone,
"Sept. 9, 1769."

After his return to town, we met frequently, and I continued the practice of making notes of his conversation, though not with so much assiduity as I wish I had done. At this time, indeed, I had a sufficient excuse for not being able to appropriate so much time to my journal; for General Paoli, after Corsica had been overpowered by the monarchy of France, was now no longer at the head of his brave countrymen, but having with difficulty escaped from his native island, had sought an asylum in Great

Britain; and it was my duty, as well as my pleasure, to attend much upon him.[1] Such particulars of Johnson's conversation at this period as I have committed to writing, I shall here introduce, without any strict attention to methodical arrangement. Sometimes short notes of different days shall be blended together, and sometimes a day may seem important enough to be separately distinguished.

He said, he would not have Sunday kept with rigid severity and gloom, but with a gravity and simplicity of behaviour.

I told him that David Hume had made a short collection of Scotticisms. "I wonder," said Johnson, "that *he* should find them."

He would not admit the importance of the question concerning the legality of general warrants. "Such a power," he observed, "must be vested in every government, to answer particular cases of necessity; and there can be no just complaint but when it is abused, for which those who administer government must be answerable. It is a matter of such indifference, a matter about which the people care so very little, that were a man to be sent over Britain to offer them an exemption from it at a halfpenny a piece, very few would purchase it." This was a specimen of that laxity of talking, which I had heard him fairly acknowledge; for, surely, while the power of granting general warrants was supposed to be legal, and the apprehension of them hung over our heads, we did not possess that security of freedom, congenial to our happy constitution, and which, by the intrepid exertions of Mr. Wilkes, has been happily established.

[1] Pascal Paoli (1726–1807) was chosen by the Corsicans in 1755 to lead them in their revolt against the rule of Genoa, as they had chosen his father before him. After the conquest of the island by the French in 1769 he escaped to England, where he remained till 1789, when he was appointed by Louis XVI. Lieutenant-General of Corsica. He refused to obey the Convention, defeated the soldiers sent against him, and offered the sovereignty of his country to Great Britain. After the dissolution of that short-lived union he returned to England, where he lived till his death.

He said, "The duration of Parliament, whether for seven years or the life of the King, appears to me so immaterial, that I would not give half a crown to turn the scale one way or the other. The *habeas corpus* is the single advantage which our government has over that of other countries."

On the 30th of September we dined together at the Mitre. I attempted to argue for the superior happiness of the savage life, upon the usual fanciful topics. JOHNSON: "Sir, there can be nothing more false. The savages have no bodily advantages beyond those of civilized men. They have not better health; and as to care or mental uneasiness, they are not above it, but below it, like bears. No, Sir; you are not to talk such paradox: let me have no more on't. It cannot entertain, far less can it instruct. Lord Monboddo, one of your Scotch judges, talked a great deal of such nonsense. I suffered *him;* but I will not suffer *you*."—BOSWELL: "But, Sir, does not Rousseau talk such nonsense?" JOHNSON: "True, Sir, but Rousseau *knows* he is talking nonsense, and laughs at the world for staring at him." BOSWELL: "How so, Sir?" JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, a man who talks nonsense so well, must know that he is talking nonsense. But I am *afraid* (chuckling and laughing), Monboddo does *not* know that he is talking nonsense."[1] BOSWELL: "Is it wrong then, Sir, to affect singularity, in order to make people stare?" JOHNSON: "Yes, if you do it by propagating error: and, indeed, it is wrong in any way. There is in human nature a general inclination to make people stare; and every wise man has himself to cure of it, and does cure himself. If

[1] His Lordship having frequently spoken in an abusive manner of Dr. Johnson in my company, I on one occasion during the lifetime of my illustrious friend could not refrain from retaliation, and repeated to him this saying. He has since published I don't know how many pages in one of his curious books, attempting, in much anger, but with pitiful effect, to persuade mankind that my illustrious friend was not the great and good man which they esteemed and ever will esteem him to be. B. See Monboddo's *Origin and Progress of Language* (1789), v. 260 *et seq.*

you wish to make people stare by doing better than others, why, make them stare till they stare their eyes out. But consider how easy it is to make people stare, by being absurd. I may do it by going into a drawing-room without my shoes. You remember the gentleman in 'The Spectator,' who had a commission of lunacy taken out against him for his extreme singularity, such as never wearing a wig, but a night-cap. Now, Sir, abstractedly, the night-cap was best: but, relatively, the advantage was overbalanced by his making the boys run after him."

Talking of a London life, he said, "The happiness of London is not to be conceived but by those who have been in it. I will venture to say, there is more learning and science within the circumference of ten miles from where we now sit, than in all the rest of the kingdom." BOSWELL: "The only disadvantage is the great distance at which people live from one another." JOHNSON: "Yes, Sir; but that is occasioned by the largeness of it, which is the cause of all the other advantages." BOSWELL: "Sometimes I have been in the humour of wishing to retire to a desert." JOHNSON: "Sir, you have desert enough in Scotland."

Although I had promised myself a great deal of instructive conversation with him on the conduct of the married state, of which I had then a near prospect, he did not say much upon that topic. Mr. Seward heard him once say, that "A man has a very bad chance for happiness in that state, unless he marries a woman of very strong and fixed principles of religion." He maintained to me, contrary to the common notion, that a woman would not be the worse wife for being learned; in which, from all that I have observed of *Artemisias*,[1] I humbly differed from him. That a woman should be sensible and well informed, I allow to be a great advantage; and think that Sir Thomas Overbury,[2] in his rude versification,

[1] See Pope's Poetical Works, Globe ed. p. 183.
[2] *A Wife*, a poem, 1614. B.

has very judiciously pointed out that degree of intelligence which is to be desired in a female companion :

"Give me, next *good*, an *understanding wife*,
By Nature *wise*, not *learned* by much art ;
Some *knowledge* on her side will all my life
More scope of conversation impart ;
Besides, her inborne virtue fortify ;
They are most firmly good, who best know why."

When I censured a gentleman of my acquaintance for marrying a second time, as it shewed a disregard of his first wife, he said, "Not at all, Sir. On the contrary, were he not to marry again, it might be concluded that his first wife had given him a disgust to marriage ; but by taking a second wife he pays the highest compliment to the first, by shewing that she made him so happy as a married man, that he wishes to be so a second time." So ingenious a turn did he give to this delicate question. And yet, on another occasion, he owned that he once had almost asked a promise of Mrs. Johnson that she would not marry again, but had checked himself. Indeed I cannot help thinking, that in his case the request would have been unreasonable ; for if Mrs. Johnson forgot, or thought it no injury to the memory of her first love,—the husband of her youth and the father of her children,—to make a second marriage, why should she be precluded from a third, should she be so inclined? In Johnson's persevering fond appropriation of his *Tetty*, even after her decease, he seems totally to have overlooked the prior claim of the honest Birmingham trader. I presume that her having been married before had, at times, given him some uneasiness ; for I remember his observing upon the marriage of one of our common friends, "He has done a very foolish thing, Sir ; he has married a widow, when he might have had a maid."

We drank tea with Mrs. Williams. I had last year the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Thrale at Dr. Johnson's one morning, and had conversation enough with her to admire her talents ; and to shew her that I was as Johnsonian as herself. Dr. Johnson had probably been kind enough to

speak well of me, for this evening he delivered me a very polite card from Mr. Thrale and her, inviting me to Streatham.

On the 6th of October I complied with this obliging invitation, and found, at an elegant villa, six miles from town, every circumstance that can make society pleasing. Johnson, though quite at home, was yet looked up to with an awe, tempered by affection, and seemed to be equally the care of his host and hostess. I rejoiced at seeing him so happy.

He played off his wit against Scotland with a good-humoured pleasantry, which gave me, though no bigot to national prejudices, an opportunity for a little contest with him. I having said that England was obliged to us for gardeners, almost all their good gardeners being Scotsmen ;—JOHNSON : "Why, Sir, that is because gardening is much more necessary amongst you than with us, which makes so many of your people learn it. It is *all* gardening with you. Things which grow wild here, must be cultivated with great care in Scotland. Pray now (throwing himself back in his chair, and laughing), are you ever able to bring the *sloe* to perfection ?"

I boasted that we had the honour of being the first to abolish the unhospitable, troublesome, and ungracious custom of giving vails to servants. JOHNSON : "Sir, you abolished vails, because you were too poor to be able to give them."

Mrs. Thrale disputed with him on the merit of Prior. He attacked him powerfully ; said he wrote of love like a man who had never felt it : his love verses were college verses ; and he repeated the song "Alexis shunn'd his fellow swains," &c. in so ludicrous a manner, as to make us all wonder how any one could have been pleased with such fantastical stuff. Mrs. Thrale stood to her gun with great courage, in defence of amorous ditties, which Johnson despised, till he at last silenced her by saying, "My dear lady, talk no more of this. Nonsense can be defended but by nonsense."

Mrs. Thrale then praised Garrick's talents for light

gay poetry; and, as a specimen, repeated his song in "Florizel and Perdita,"[1] and dwelt with pleasure on this line:

"I'd smile with the simple, and feed with the poor."

JOHNSON: "Nay, my dear lady, this will never do. Poor David! Smile with the simple;—What folly is that? And who would feed with the poor that can help it? No, no; let me smile with the wise, and feed with the rich." I repeated this sally to Garrick, and wondered to find his sensibility as a writer not a little irritated by it. To soothe him, I observed, that Johnson spared none of us; and I quoted the passage in Horace, in which he compares one who attacks his friends for the sake of a laugh, to a pushing ox, that is marked by a bunch of hay put upon his horns: *fœnum habet in cornu.* "Ay," said Garrick, vehemently, "he has a whole *mow* of it."

Talking of history, Johnson said, "We may know historical facts to be true, as we may know facts in common life to be true. Motives are generally unknown. We cannot trust to the characters we find in history, unless when they are drawn by those who knew the persons; as those, for instance, by Sallust and by Lord Clarendon."

He would not allow much merit to Whitfield's oratory. "His popularity, Sir," said he, "is chiefly owing to the peculiarity of his manner. He would be followed by crowds were he to wear a night-cap in the pulpit, or were he to preach from a tree."

I know not from what spirit of contradiction he burst out into a violent declamation against the Corsicans, of whose heroism I talked in high terms. "Sir," said he, "what is all this rout about the Corsicans? They have been at war with the Genoese for upwards of twenty years, and have never yet taken their fortified towns. They might have battered down their walls, and reduced them

[1] Garrick's barbarous mutilation of *The Winter's Tale.* The line should run, "They, smile, &c."

to powder in twenty years. They might have pulled the walls in pieces, and cracked the stones with their teeth in twenty years." It was in vain to argue with him upon the want of artillery: he was not to be resisted for the moment.

On the evening of October 10, I presented Dr. Johnson to General Paoli. I had greatly wished that two men, for whom I had the highest esteem, should meet. They met with a manly ease, mutually conscious of their own abilities, and of the abilities of each other. The General spoke Italian, and Dr. Johnson English, and understood one another very well, with a little aid of interpretation from me, in which I compared myself to an isthmus which joins two great continents. Upon Johnson's approach, the General said, "From what I have read of your works, Sir, and from what Mr. Boswell has told me of you, I have long held you in great veneration." The General talked of languages being formed on the particular notions and manners of a people, without knowing which we cannot know the language. We may know the direct signification of single words; but by these no beauty of expression, no sally of genius, no wit is conveyed to the mind. All this must be by allusion to other ideas. "Sir," said Johnson, "you talk of language, as if you had never done any thing else but study it, instead of governing a nation." The General said, "*Questo è un troppo gran complimento;* this is too great a compliment." Johnson answered, "I should have thought so, Sir, if I had not heard you talk." The General asked him what he thought of the spirit of infidelity which was so prevalent. JOHNSON: "Sir, this gloom of infidelity, I hope, is only a transient cloud passing through the hemisphere, which will soon be dissipated, and the sun break forth with his usual splendour." "You think then," said the General, "that they will change their principles like their clothes." JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, if they bestow no more thought on principles than on dress, it must be so." The General said, that "A great part of the fashionable infidelity was

owing to a desire of shewing courage. Men who have no opportunities of shewing it as to things in this life, take death and futurity as objects on which to display it." JOHNSON: "That is mighty foolish affectation. Fear is one of the passions of human nature, of which it is impossible to divest it. You remember that the Emperor Charles V. when he read upon the tomb-stone of a Spanish nobleman, 'Here lies one who never knew fear,' wittily said, 'Then he never snuffed a candle with his fingers.'"

He talked a few words of French to the General; but finding he did not do it with facility, he asked for pen, ink, and paper, and wrote the following note:

"*J'ai lu dans la géographie de Lucas de Linda un Paternoster écrit dans une langue tout-à-fait differente de l'Italienne, et de toutes autres lesquelles se dérivent du Latin. L'auteur l'appelle* linguam Corsicæ rusticam; *elle a peut-être passé, peu à peu; mais elle a certainement prévalue autrefois dans les montagnes et dans la campagne. Le même auteur dit la même chose en parlant de Sardaigne; qu'il y a deux langues dans l'Isle, une des villes, l'autre de la campagne.*"

The General immediately informed him that the *lingua rustica* was only in Sardinia.

Dr. Johnson went home with me, and drank tea till late in the night. He said, "General Paoli had the loftiest port of any man he had ever seen." He denied that military men were always the best bred men. "Perfect good breeding, he observed, consists in having no particular mark of any profession, but a general elegance of manners; whereas, in a military man, you can commonly distinguish the *brand* of a soldier, *l'homme d'épée.*"

Dr. Johnson shunned to-night any discussion of the perplexed question of fate and free-will, which I attempted to agitate: "Sir," said he, "we *know* our will is free, and *there's* an end on't."

He honoured me with his company at dinner on the 16th of October, at my lodgings in Old Bond Street, with Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Garrick, Dr. Goldsmith,

Mr. Murphy, Mr. Bickerstaff,[1] and Mr. Thomas Davies. Garrick played round him with a fond vivacity, taking hold of the breasts of his coat, and looking up in his face with a lively archness, complimented him on the good health which he seemed then to enjoy; while the Sage, shaking his head, beheld him with a gentle complacency. One of the company not being come at the appointed hour, I proposed, as usual upon such occasions, to order dinner to be served; adding, "Ought six people to be kept waiting for one?" "Why, yes," answered Johnson, with a delicate humanity, "if the one will suffer more by your sitting down, than the six will do by waiting." Goldsmith, to divert the tedious minutes, strutted about, bragging of his dress, and I believe was seriously vain of it, for his mind was wonderfully prone to such impressions. "Come, come," said Garrick; "talk no more of that. You are, perhaps, the worst—eh, eh!"—Goldsmith was eagerly attempting to interrupt him, when Garrick went on, laughing ironically, "Nay, you will always *look* like a gentleman; but I am talking of being well or *ill dress*." "Well, let me tell you," said Goldsmith, "when my tailor brought home my bloom-coloured coat, he said, 'Sir, I have a favour to beg of you. When anybody asks you who made your clothes, be pleased to mention John Filby, at the Harrow, in Water Lane.'" JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, that was because he knew the strange colour would attract crowds to gaze at it, and thus they might hear of him, and see how well he could make a coat even of so absurd a colour."[2]

After dinner our conversation first turned upon Pope. Johnson said, his characters of men were admirably drawn,

[1] Isaac Bickerstaff, author of *Love in a Village*, *The Maid in a Mill*, and other pretty and popular plays, was obliged to fly the country on suspicion of a capital offence.

[2] In Prior's *Life of Goldsmith* (ii. 232) may be seen the bill for this renowned suit, from which it would appear that the breeches were *bloom-coloured*, though the colour of the coat ("a half-dress suit of ratteen, lined with satin") is not specified, and that the tailor's name was William, not John, Filby.

those of women not so well. He repeated to us, in his forcible melodious manner, the concluding lines of the Dunciad. While he was talking loudly in praise of those lines, one of the company ventured to say, "Too fine for such a poem:—a poem on what?" JOHNSON (with a disdainful look), "Why, on *dunces*. It was worth while being a dunce then. Ah, Sir, hadst *thou* lived in those days! It is not worth while being a dunce now, when there are no wits." Bickerstaff observed, as a peculiar circumstance, that Pope's fame was higher when he was alive than it was then. Johnson said, his Pastorals were poor things, though the versification was fine. He told us, with high satisfaction, the anecdote of Pope's inquiring who was the author of his "London," and saying, he will be soon *déterré*. He observed, that in Dryden's poetry there were passages drawn from a profundity which Pope could never reach. He repeated some fine lines on love, by the former (which I have now forgotten), and gave great applause to the character of Zimri. Goldsmith said, that Pope's character of Addison shewed a deep knowledge of the human heart. Johnson said that the description of the temple, in "The Mourning Bride,"[1] was the finest poetical passage he had ever read; he recollected none in Shakespeare equal to it.—"But," said Garrick, all alarmed for 'the god of his idolatry,' "we know not the extent and variety of his powers. We are to suppose there are such passages in his works. Shakespeare must not suffer from the badness of our memories." Johnson, diverted by this enthusiastic jealousy, went on with great ardour: "No, Sir; Congreve has *nature*" (smiling on the tragic eagerness of Garrick); but composing himself, he added, "Sir, this is not comparing Congreve on the whole with Shakespeare on the whole; but only maintaining that Congreve has one finer passage than any that can be found in Shakespeare. Sir, a man may have no more than ten guineas in the world, but he may have those ten guineas in one piece; and so may have a finer piece than

[1] Congreve's *Mourning Bride*, ii. 3.

a man who has ten thousand pound: but then he has only one ten-guinea piece.—What I mean is, that you can shew me no passage where there is simply a description of material objects, without any intermixture of moral notions, which produces such an effect." Mr. Murphy mentioned Shakespeare's description of the night before the battle of Agincourt; but it was observed it had *men* in it. Mr. Davies suggested the speech of Juliet, in which she figures herself awaking in the tomb of her ancestors. Some one mentioned the description of Dover Cliff. JOHNSON: "No, Sir; it should be all precipice,—all vacuum. The crows impede your fall. The diminished appearance of the boats, and other circumstances, are all very good description; but do not impress the mind at once with the horrible idea of immense height. The impression is divided; you pass on by computation, from one stage of the tremendous space to another. Had the girl in 'The Mourning Bride' said, she could not cast her shoe to the top of one of the pillars in the temple, it would not have aided the idea, but weakened it."

Talking of a barrister who had a bad utterance, some one (to rouse Johnson) wickedly said, that he was unfortunate in not having been taught oratory by Sheridan. JOHNSON: "Nay, Sir, if he had been taught by Sheridan, he would have cleared the room." GARRICK: "Sheridan has too much vanity to be a good man."—We shall now see Johnson's mode of *defending* a man; taking him into his own hands, and discriminating. JOHNSON: "No, Sir. There is, to be sure, in Sheridan, something to reprehend and every thing to laugh at; but, Sir, he is not a bad man. No, Sir; were mankind to be divided into good and bad, he would stand considerably within the ranks of good. And, Sir, it must be allowed that Sheridan excels in plain declamation, though he can exhibit no character."

I should, perhaps, have suppressed this disquisition concerning a person of whose merit and worth I think with respect, had he not attacked Johnson so outrageously in his "Life of Swift," and, at the same time, treated us his admirers as a set of pigmies. He who

has provoked the lash of wit, cannot complain that he smarts from it.

Mrs. Montague, a lady distinguished for having written an Essay on Shakespeare, being mentioned;—REYNOLDS: "I think that essay does her honour." JOHNSON: "Yes, Sir; it does *her* honour, but it would do nobody else honour. I have, indeed, not read it all. But when I take up the end of a web, and find it packthread, I do not expect, by looking farther, to find embroidery. Sir, I will venture to say, there is not one sentence of true criticism in her book." GARRICK: "But, Sir, surely it shews how much Voltaire has mistaken Shakespeare, which nobody else has done." JOHNSON: "Sir, nobody else has thought it worth while. And what merit is there in that? You may as well praise a schoolmaster for whipping a boy who has construed ill. No, Sir, there is no real criticism in it: none shewing the beauty of thought, as formed on the workings of the human heart."

The admirers of this Essay[1] may be offended at the slighting manner in which Johnson spoke of it; but let it be remembered, that he gave his honest opinion unbiassed by any prejudice, or any proud jealousy of a woman intruding herself into the chair of criticism; for Sir Joshua Reynolds has told me, that when the "Essay" first came out, and it was not known who had written it, Johnson wondered how Sir Joshua could like it. At this time Sir Joshua himself had received no information concerning the author, except being assured by one of our most

[1] Of whom I acknowledge myself to be one, considering it as a piece of the secondary or comparative species of criticism; and not of that profound species which alone Dr. Johnson would allow to be "real criticism." It is, besides, clearly and elegantly expressed, and has done effectually what it professed to do, namely, vindicated Shakespeare from the misrepresentations of Voltaire; and considering how many young people were misled by his witty, though false observations, Mrs. Montague's Essay was of service to Shakespeare with a certain class of readers, and is, therefore, entitled to praise. Johnson, I am assured, allowed the merit which I have stated, saying (with reference to Voltaire), "it is conclusive *ad hominem*." B.

eminent literati, that it was clear its author did not know the Greek tragedies in the original. One day at Sir Joshua's table, when it was related that Mrs. Montague, in an excess of compliment to the author of a modern tragedy, had exclaimed, "I tremble for Shakespeare;" Johnson said, "When Shakespeare has got —— for his rival, and Mrs. Montague for his defender, he is in a poor state indeed."

Johnson proceeded: "The Scotchman [Lord Kames] has taken the right method in his 'Elements of Criticism.' I do not mean that he has taught us any thing; but he has told us old things in a new way." MURPHY: "He seems to have read a great deal of French criticism, and wants to make it his own; as if he had been for years anatomizing the heart of man, and peeping into every cranny of it." GOLDSMITH: "It is easier to write that book, than to read it." JOHNSON: "We have an example of true criticism in Burke's 'Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful'; and, if I recollect, there is also Du Bos;[1] and Bouhours,[2] who shews all beauty to depend on truth. There is no great merit in telling how many plays have ghosts in them, and how this ghost is better than that. You must shew how terror is impressed on the human heart.—In the description of night in 'Macbeth,' the beetle and the bat detract from the general idea of darkness, —inspissated gloom."

Politics being mentioned, he said, "This petitioning is a new mode of distressing government, and a mighty easy one. I will undertake to get petitions either against quarter guineas or half guineas, with the help of a little hot wine. There must be no yielding to encourage this. The object is not important enough. We are not to blow up half a dozen palaces, because one cottage is burning."

The conversation then took another turn. JOHNSON:

[1] *Réflexions Critiques sur la Poésie et la Peinture;* by Jean Baptiste Du Bos, Paris, 1719.

[2] *Manière de bien penser dans les Ouvrages d'Esprit;* by Dominique Bouhours, Paris, 1687.

"It is amazing what ignorance of certain points one sometimes finds in men of eminence. A wit about town, who wrote Latin bawdy verses, asked me how it happened that England and Scotland, which were once two kingdoms, were now one:—and Sir Fletcher Norton did not seem to know that there were such publications as the 'Reviews.'"

"The ballad of Hardyknute has no great merit, if it be really ancient. People talk of nature. But mere obvious nature may be exhibited with very little power of mind."[1]

On Thursday, October 19, I passed the evening with him at his house. He advised me to complete a dictionary of words peculiar to Scotland, of which I shewed him a specimen. "Sir," said he, "Ray has made a collection of north-country words. By collecting those of your country, you will do a useful thing towards the history of the language." He bade me also go on with collections which I was making upon the antiquities of Scotland. "Make a large book; a folio." BOSWELL: "But of what use will it be, Sir?" JOHNSON: "Never mind the use; do it."

I complained that he had not mentioned Garrick in his "Preface to Shakespeare"; and asked him if he did not admire him. JOHNSON: "Yes, as 'a poor player, who frets and struts his hour upon the stage';—as a shadow." BOSWELL: "But has he not brought Shakespeare into notice?" JOHNSON: "Sir, to allow that, would be to lampoon the age. Many of Shakespeare's plays are the worse for being acted: 'Macbeth,' for instance." BOSWELL: "What, Sir, is nothing gained by decoration and action? Indeed, I do wish that you had mentioned Garrick." JOHNSON: "My dear Sir, had I mentioned him, I must have mentioned many more; Mrs. Pritchard, Mrs. Cibber,—nay, and Mr. Cibber too; he too altered

[1] The author was Lady Wardlaw, wife of Sir Henry Wardlaw of Pitreavie. It was first published at Edinburgh in 1719. "The ballad of Hardyknute," said Sir Walter Scott, "was the first poem I ever learned, the last I shall ever forget." See Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, i. 26 and 114, x. 138.

Shakespeare." BOSWELL: "You have read his 'Apology,'[1] Sir?" JOHNSON: "Yes, it is very entertaining. But as for Cibber himself, taking from his conversation all that he ought not to have said, he was a poor creature. I remember when he brought me one of his Odes to have my opinion of it, I could not bear such nonsense, and would not let him read it to the end; so little respect had I for *that great man!* (laughing.) Yet I remember Richardson wondering that I could treat him with familiarity."

I mentioned to him that I had seen the execution of several convicts at Tyburn, two days before, and that none of them seemed to be under any concern.[2] JOHNSON: "Most of them, Sir, have never thought at all." BOSWELL: "But is not the fear of death natural to man?" JOHNSON: "So much so, Sir, that the whole of life is but keeping away the thoughts of it." He then, in a low and earnest tone, talked of his meditating upon the awful hour of his own dissolution, and in what manner he should conduct himself upon that occasion: "I know not," said he, "whether I should wish to have a friend by me, or have it all between GOD and myself."

Talking of our feeling for the distresses of others;—JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, there is much noise made about it, but it is greatly exaggerated. No, Sir, we have a certain degree of feeling to prompt us to do good; more than that, Providence does not intend. It would be misery to no purpose." BOSWELL: "But suppose now, Sir, that one of your intimate friends were apprehended for an offence for which he might be hanged." JOHNSON: "I should do what I could to bail him, and give him any other assistance; but if he were once fairly hanged, I should not suffer." BOSWELL: "Would you

[1] *An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber, Comedian, with an Historical View of the Stage during his own Time*, London, 1740. The best and most amusing book ever written about the theatre.

[2] Boswell's fancy for witnessing executions almost matched George Selwyn's. In one of his *Hypochondriac* essays he professes to defend it as a natural impulse.

eat your dinner that day, Sir?" JOHNSON: "Yes, Sir; and eat it as if he were eating with me. Why, there's Baretti, who is to be tried for his life to-morrow, friends have risen up for him on every side; yet if he should be hanged, none of them will eat a slice of plum-pudding the less. Sir, that sympathetic feeling goes a very little way in depressing the mind."

I told him that I had dined lately at Foote's, who shewed me a letter which he had received from Tom Davies, telling him that he had not been able to sleep, from the concern he felt on account of "*This sad affair of Baretti*," begging of him to try if he could suggest any thing that might be of service; and, at the same time, recommending to him an industrious young man who kept a pickle-shop. JOHNSON: "Ay, Sir, here you have a specimen of human sympathy; a friend hanged, and a cucumber pickled. We know not whether Baretti or the pickle-man has kept Davies from sleep: nor does he know himself. And as to his not sleeping, Sir; Tom Davies is a very great man; Tom has been upon the stage, and knows how to do those things. I have not been upon the stage, and cannot do those things." BOSWELL: "I have often blamed myself, Sir, for not feeling for others as sensibly as many say they do." JOHNSON: "Sir, don't be duped by them any more. You will find these very feeling people are not very ready to do you good. They *pay* you by *feeling*."

BOSWELL: "Foote has a great deal of humour." JOHNSON: "Yes, Sir." BOSWELL: "He has a singular talent of exhibiting character." JOHNSON: "Sir, it is not a talent; it is a vice; it is what others abstain from. It is not comedy, which exhibits the character of a species, as that of a miser gathered from many misers: it is farce which exhibits individuals." BOSWELL: "Did not he think of exhibiting you, Sir?" JOHNSON: "Sir, fear restrained him; he knew I would have broken his bones. I would have saved him the trouble of cutting off a leg; I would not have left him a leg to cut off." BOSWELL: "Pray, Sir, is not Foote an infidel?" JOHNSON: "I do

not know, Sir, that the fellow is an infidel; but if he be an infidel, he is an infidel as a dog is an infidel; that is to say, he has never thought upon the subject."[1] BOSWELL: "I suppose, Sir, he has thought superficially, and seized the first notions which occurred to his mind." JOHNSON: "Why then, Sir, still he is like a dog, that snatches the piece next him. Did you never observe that dogs have not the power of comparing? A dog will take a small bit of meat as readily as a large, when both are before him."

"Buchanan," he observed, "has fewer *centos* than any modern Latin poet. He has not only had great knowledge of the Latin language, but was a great poetical genius. Both the Scaligers praise him."

He again talked of the passage in Congreve with high commendation, and said, "Shakespeare never has six lines together without a fault. Perhaps you may find seven: but this does not refute my general assertion. If I come to an orchard, and say there's no fruit here, and then comes a poring man, who finds two apples and three pears, and tells me, 'Sir, you are mistaken, I have found both apples and pears,' I should laugh at him: what would that be to the purpose?"

[1] When Mr. Foote was at Edinburgh, he thought fit to entertain a numerous Scotch company with a great deal of coarse jocularity, at the expense of Dr. Johnson, imagining it would be acceptable. I felt this as not civil to me; but sat very patiently till he had exhausted his merriment on that subject; and then observed that surely Johnson must be allowed to have some sterling wit, and that I had heard him say a very good thing of Mr. Foote himself. "Ah, my old friend Sam," cried Foote, "no man says better things; do let us have it." Upon which I told the above story, which produced a very loud laugh from the company. But I never saw Foote so disconcerted. He looked grave and angry, and entered into a serious refutation of the justice of the remark. "What, Sir," said he, "talk thus of a man of liberal education:—a man who for years was at the University of Oxford:—a man who has added sixteen new characters to the English drama of his country." B. Foote was at Worcester College, where he was in perpetual trouble with the authorities, and left it without taking a degree. *Dr. Hill.*

Boswell: "What do you think of Dr. Young's 'Night Thoughts,' Sir?" Johnson: "Why, Sir, there are very fine things in them." Boswell: "Is there not less religion in the nation now, Sir, than there was formerly?" Johnson: "I don't know, Sir, that there is." Boswell: "For instance, there used to be a chaplain in every great family, which we do not find now." Johnson: "Neither do you find any of the state servants which great families used formerly to have. There is a change of modes in the whole department of life."

Next day, October 20, he appeared, for the only time I suppose in his life, as a witness in a court of justice, being called to give evidence to the character of Mr. Baretti, who having stabbed a man in the street, was arraigned at the Old Bailey for murder. Never did such a constellation of genius enlighten the awful Sessions House, emphatically called Justice Hall; Mr. Burke, Mr. Garrick, Mr. Beauclerk, and Dr. Johnson; and undoubtedly their favourable testimony had due weight with the Court and Jury. Johnson gave his evidence in a slow, deliberate, and distinct manner, which was uncommonly impressive. It is well known that Mr. Baretti was acquitted.[1]

On the 26th of October, we dined together at the Mitre tavern. I found fault with Foote for indulging his talent of ridicule at the expense of his visitors, which I colloquially termed making fools of his company. Johnson: "Why, Sir, when you go to see Foote, you do not go to see a saint: you go to see a man who will be entertained at your house, and then bring you on a public stage; who will entertain you at his house, for the very purpose of bringing you on a public stage. Sir, he does not make fools of his company; they whom he exposes are fools already: he only brings them into action."

Talking of trade, he observed, "It is a mistaken notion that a vast deal of money is brought into a nation by trade. It is not so. Commodities come from commodi-

[1] Reynolds (who was one of Baretti's bail) and Goldsmith were also among the witnesses. Dr. Hill (ii. 97) has printed the evidence for character from the *Sessional Reports* for 1769.

ties; but trade produces no capital accession of wealth. However, though there should be little profit in money, there is a considerable profit in pleasure, as it gives to one nation the productions of another; as we have wines and fruits, and many other foreign articles, brought to us." BOSWELL: "Yes, Sir, and there is a profit in pleasure, by its furnishing occupation to such numbers of mankind." JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, you cannot call that pleasure to which all are adverse, and which none begin but with the hope of leaving off; a thing which men dislike before they have tried it, and when they have tried it." BOSWELL: "But, Sir, the mind must be employed, and we grow weary when idle." JOHNSON: "That is, Sir, because others being busy, we want company; but if we were all idle, there would be no growing weary; we should all entertain one another. There is, indeed, this in trade:—it gives men an opportunity of improving their situation. If there were no trade, many who are poor would always remain poor. But no man loves labour for itself." BOSWELL: "Yes, Sir, I know a person who does. He is a very laborious judge, and he loves the labour" [his father]. JOHNSON: "Sir, that is because he loves respect and distinction. Could he have them without labour, he would like it less." BOSWELL: "He tells me he likes it for itself."—"Why, Sir, he fancies so, because he is not accustomed to abstract."

We went home to his house to tea. Mrs. Williams made it with sufficient dexterity, notwithstanding her blindness, though her manner of satisfying herself that the cups were full enough, appeared to me a little awkward; for I fancied she put her finger down a certain way, till she felt the tea touch it.[1] In my first elation at being allowed the privilege of attending Dr. Johnson at his late visits to this lady, which was like being *e secretiori-*

[1] I have since had reason to think that I was mistaken; for I have been informed by a lady, who was long intimate with her, and likely to be a more accurate observer of such matters, that she had acquired such a niceness of touch, as to know, by the feeling on the outside of the cup, how near it was to being full. B.

bus consiliis, I willingly drank cup after cup, as if it had been the Heliconian spring. But as the charm of novelty went off, I grew more fastidious; and besides, I discovered that she was of a peevish temper.

There was a pretty large circle this evening. Dr. Johnson was in very good humour, lively, and ready to talk upon all subjects. Mr. Ferguson, the self-taught philosopher, told him of a new-invented machine which went without horses; a man who sat in it turned a handle, which worked a spring that drove it forward.[1] "Then, Sir," said Johnson, "what is gained is, the man has his choice whether he will move himself alone, or himself and the machine too." Dominicetti[2] being mentioned, he would not allow him any merit. "There is nothing in all this boasted system. No, Sir; medicated baths can be no better than warm water; their only effect can be that of tepid moisture." One of the company took the other side, maintaining that medicines of various sorts, and some too of most powerful effect, are introduced into the human frame by the medium of the pores; and, therefore, when warm water is impregnated with salutiferous substances, it may produce great effects as a bath. This appeared to me very satisfactory. Johnson did not answer it; but talking for victory, and determined to be master of the field, he had recourse to the device which Goldsmith imputed to him in the witty words of one of Cibber's comedies; "There is no arguing with Johnson; for when his pistol misses fire, he knocks you down with the butt end of it." He turned to the gentleman, "Well, Sir, go to Dominicetti, and get thyself fumigated, but be

[1] James Ferguson (1710–76), born in Banff of very poor parents. First as a shepherd, and afterwards during his various shifts to earn a livelihood in Edinburgh and London, he studied astronomy to such good purpose that in 1763 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society and received a pension of fifty pounds from the King. He devoted the rest of his life to lecturing and writing on his favourite science. His principal works have been edited by Sir David Brewster.

[2] An Italian quack whose baths in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, were very popular at this time. *Croker.*

sure that the steam be directed to thy *head*, for *that* is the *peccant part*." This produced a triumphant roar of laughter from the motley assembly of philosophers, printers, and dependents, male and female.

I know not how so whimsical a thought came into my mind, but I asked, "If, Sir, you were shut up in a castle, and a new-born child with you, what would you do?" JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, I should not much like my company." BOSWELL: "But would you take the trouble of rearing it?" He seemed, as may be supposed, unwilling to pursue the subject: but upon my persevering in my question, replied, "Why yes, Sir, I would; but I must have all conveniences. If I had no garden, I would make a shed on the roof, and take it there for fresh air. I should feed it, and wash it much, and with warm water, to please it, not with cold water to give it pain." BOSWELL: "But, Sir, does not heat relax?" JOHNSON: "Sir, you are not to imagine the water is to be very hot. I would not *coddle* the child. No, Sir, the hardy method of treating children does no good. I'll take you five children from London, who shall cuff five Highland children. Sir, a man bred in London will carry a burden, or run or wrestle, as well as a man brought up in the hardest manner in the country." BOSWELL: "Good living, I suppose, makes the Londoners strong." JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, I don't know that it does. Our chairmen from Ireland, who are as strong men as any, have been brought up upon potatoes. Quantity makes up for quality." BOSWELL: "Would you teach this child that I have furnished you with, any thing?" JOHNSON: "No, I should not be apt to teach it." BOSWELL: "Would not you have a pleasure in teaching it?" JOHNSON: "No, Sir, I should *not* have a pleasure in teaching it." BOSWELL: "Have you not a pleasure in teaching men?—*There* I have you. You have the same pleasure in teaching men, that I should have in teaching children." JOHNSON: "Why, something about that."

BOSWELL: "Do you think, Sir, that what is called natural affection is born with us? It seems to me to be

the effect of habit, or of gratitude for kindness. No child has it for a parent, whom it has not seen." JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, I think there is an instinctive natural affection in parents towards their children."

Russia being mentioned as likely to become a great empire, by the rapid increase of population:—JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, I see no prospect of their propagating more. They can have no more children than they can get. I know of no way to make them breed more than they do. It is not from reason and prudence that people marry, but from inclination. A man is poor; he thinks, 'I cannot be worse, and so I'll e'en take Peggy.'" BOSWELL: "But have not nations been more populous at one period than another?" JOHNSON: "Yes, Sir; but that has been owing to the people being less thinned at one period than another, whether by emigration, war, or pestilence, not by their being more or less prolific. Births at all times bear the same proportion to the same number of people." BOSWELL: "But, to consider the state of our own country;—does not throwing a number of farms into one hand hurt population?" JOHNSON: "Why no, Sir; the same quantity of food being produced, will be consumed by the same number of mouths, though the people may be disposed of in different ways. We see, if corn be dear, and butchers' meat cheap, the farmers all apply themselves to the raising of corn, till it becomes plentiful and cheap, and then butchers' meat becomes dear; so that an equality is always preserved. No, Sir, let fanciful men do as they will, depend upon it, it is difficult to disturb the system of life." BOSWELL: "But, Sir, is it not a very bad thing for landlords to oppress their tenants by raising their rents?" JOHNSON: "Very bad. But, Sir, it never can have any general influence; it may distress some individuals. For, consider this: landlords cannot do without tenants. Now tenants will not give more for land than land is worth. If they can make more of their money by keeping a shop, or any other way, they'll do it, and so oblige landlords to let land come back to a reasonable rent, in order that they

may get tenants. Land, in England, is an article of commerce. A tenant who pays his landlord his rent, thinks himself no more obliged to him than you think yourself obliged to a man in whose shop you buy a piece of goods. He knows the landlord does not let him have his land for less than he can get from others, in the same manner as the shopkeeper sells his goods. No shopkeeper sells a yard of riband for sixpence when sevenpence is the current price." BOSWELL: "But, Sir, is it not better that tenants should be dependent on landlords?" JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, as there are many more tenants than landlords, perhaps strictly speaking, we should wish not. But if you please you may let your lands cheap, and so get the value, part in money and part in homage. I should agree with you in that." BOSWELL: "So, Sir, you laugh at schemes of political improvement." JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, most schemes of political improvement are very laughable things."

He observed, "Providence has wisely ordered that the more numerous men are, the more difficult it is for them to agree in any thing, and so they are governed. There is no doubt, that if the poor should reason, 'We'll be the poor no longer, we'll make the rich take their turn,' they could easily do it, were it not that they can't agree. So the common soldiers, though so much more numerous than their officers, are governed by them for the same reason."

He said, "Mankind have a strong attachment to the habitations to which they have been accustomed. You see the inhabitants of Norway do not with one consent quit it, and go to some part of America, where there is a mild climate, and where they may have the same produce from land, with the tenth part of the labour. No, Sir; their affection for their old dwellings, and the terror of a general change, keep them at home. Thus, we see many of the finest spots in the world thinly inhabited, and many rugged spots well inhabited."

"The London Chronicle," which was the only newspaper he constantly took in, being brought, the office of

reading it aloud was assigned to me. I was diverted by his impatience. He made me pass over so many parts of it, that my task was very easy. He would not suffer one of the petitions to the King about the Middlesex election to be read.

I had hired a Bohemian as my servant while I remained in London, and being much pleased with him, I asked Dr. Johnson whether his being a Roman Catholic should prevent my taking him with me to Scotland. JOHNSON: "Why no, Sir. If *he* has no objection, you can have none." BOSWELL: "So, Sir, you are no great enemy to the Roman Catholic religion." JOHNSON: "No more, Sir, than to the Presbyterian religion." BOSWELL: "You are joking." JOHNSON: "No, Sir, I really think so. Nay, Sir, of the two, I prefer the Popish." BOSWELL: "How so, Sir?" JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, the Presbyterians have no church, no apostolical ordination." BOSWELL: "And do you think that absolutely essential, Sir?" JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, as it was an apostolic institution, I think it is dangerous to be without it. And, Sir, the Presbyterians have no public worship: they have no form of prayer in which they know they are to join. They go to hear a man pray, and are to judge whether they will join with him." BOSWELL: "But, Sir, their doctrine is the same with that of the Church of England. Their Confession of Faith, and the Thirty-Nine Articles, contain the same points, even the doctrine of predestination." JOHNSON: "Why yes, Sir; predestination was a part of the clamour of the times, so it is mentioned in our articles, but with as little positiveness as could be." BOSWELL: "Is it necessary, Sir, to believe all the thirty-nine articles?" JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, that is a question which has been much agitated. Some have thought it necessary that they should all be believed; others have considered them to be only articles of peace, that is to say, you are not to preach against them." BOSWELL: "It appears to me, Sir, that predestination, or what is equivalent to it, cannot be avoided, if we hold a universal prescience in the Deity." JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, does not GOD every day see things

going on without preventing them?" BOSWELL: "True, Sir, but if a thing be *certainly* foreseen, it must be fixed, and cannot happen otherwise; and if we apply this consideration to the human mind, there is no free will, nor do I see how prayer can be of any avail." He mentioned Dr. Clarke, and Bishop Bramhall on Liberty and Necessity, and bid me read South's "Sermons on Prayer"; but avoided the question which has excruciated philosophers and divines beyond any other. I did not press it farther, when I perceived that he was displeased, and shrunk from any abridgement of an attribute usually ascribed to the Divinity, however irreconcilable in its full extent with the grand system of moral government. His supposed orthodoxy here cramped the vigorous powers of his understanding. He was confined by a chain which early imagination and long habit made him think massy and strong, but which, had he ventured to try, he could at once have snapt asunder.

I proceeded: "What do you think, Sir, of Purgatory, as believed by the Roman Catholics?" JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, it is a very harmless doctrine. They are of opinion that the generality of mankind are neither so obstinately wicked as to deserve everlasting punishment, nor so good as to merit being admitted into the society of blessed spirits; and therefore that GOD is graciously pleased to allow of a middle state, where they may be purified by certain degrees of suffering. You see, Sir, there is nothing unreasonable in this." BOSWELL: "But then, Sir, their masses for the dead?" JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, if it be once established that there are souls in purgatory, it is as proper to pray for *them*, as for our brethren of mankind who are yet in this life." BOSWELL: "The idolatry of the Mass?" JOHNSON: "Sir, there is no idolatry in the Mass. They believe GOD to be there, and they adore him." BOSWELL: "The worship of Saints?" JOHNSON: "Sir, they do not worship saints; they invoke them; they only ask their prayers. I am talking all this time of the *doctrines* of the Church of Rome. I grant you that in *practice*, Purgatory is made a lucrative imposition, and

that the people do become idolatrous as they recommend themselves to the tutelary protection of particular saints. I think their giving the sacrament only in one kind is criminal, because it is contrary to the express institution of CHRIST, and I wonder how the Council of Trent admitted it." BOSWELL: "Confession?" JOHNSON: "Why, I don't know but that is a good thing. The Scripture says, 'Confess your faults one to another,' and the priests confess as well as the laity. Then it must be considered that their absolution is only upon repentance, and often upon penance also. You think your sins may be forgiven without penance, upon repentance alone."

I thus ventured to mention all the common objections against the Roman Catholic Church, that I might hear so great a man upon them. What he said is here accurately recorded. But it is not improbable that if one had taken the other side, he might have reasoned differently.

I must however mention, that he had a respect for "*the old religion*," as the mild Melancthon called that of the Roman Catholic Church, even while he was exerting himself for its reformation in some particulars. Sir William Scott informs me, that he heard Johnson say, "A man who is converted from Protestantism to Popery, may be sincere: he parts with nothing: he is only superadding to what he already had. But a convert from Popery to Protestantism, gives up so much of what he has held as sacred as any thing that he retains: there is so much *laceration of mind* in such a conversion, that it can hardly be sincere and lasting." The truth of this reflection may be confirmed by many and eminent instances, some of which will occur to most of my readers.

When we were alone, I introduced the subject of death, and endeavoured to maintain that the fear of it might be got over. I told him that David Hume said to me, he was no more uneasy to think he should *not be* after his life, than that he *had not been* before he began to exist. JOHNSON: "Sir, if he really thinks so, his perceptions are disturbed; he is mad; if he does not think so, he lies. He may tell you, he holds his finger in the flame of a

candle, without feeling pain; would you believe him? When he dies, he at least gives up all he has." BOSWELL: "Foote, Sir, told me, that when he was very ill he was not afraid to die." JOHNSON: "It is not true, Sir. Hold a pistol to Foote's breast, or to Hume's breast, and threaten to kill them, and you'll see how they behave." BOSWELL: "But may we not fortify our minds for the approach of death?"—Here I am sensible I was in the wrong, to bring before his view what he ever looked upon with horror; for although when in a celestial frame of mind in his "Vanity of Human Wishes," he has supposed death to be "kind Nature's signal for retreat," from this state of being to "a happier seat," his thoughts upon this awful change were in general full of dismal apprehensions. His mind resembled the vast amphitheatre, the Coliseum at Rome. In the centre stood his judgment, which like a mighty gladiator, combated those apprehensions that, like the wild beasts of the *Arena*, were all around in cells, ready to be let out upon him. After a conflict, he drives them back into their dens; but not killing them, they were still assailing him. To my question, whether we might not fortify our minds for the approach of death, he answered, in a passion, "No, Sir, let it alone. It matters not how a man dies, but how he lives. The act of dying is not of importance, it lasts so short a time." He added (with an earnest look), "A man knows it must be so, and submits. It will do him no good to whine."

I attempted to continue the conversation. He was so provoked, that he said: "Give us no more of this;" and was thrown into such a state of agitation, that he expressed himself in a way that alarmed and distressed me; shewed an impatience that I should leave him, and when I was going away, called to me sternly, "Don't let us meet to-morrow."

I went home exceedingly uneasy. All the harsh observations which I had ever heard made upon his character, crowded into my mind; and I seemed to myself like the man who had put his head into the lion's mouth a great many times with perfect safety, but at last had it bit off.

Next morning I sent him a note, stating that I might have been in the wrong, but it was not intentionally; he was therefore, I could not help thinking, too severe upon me. That notwithstanding our agreement not to meet that day, I would call on him in my way to the city, and stay five minutes by my watch. "You are," said I, "in my mind, since last night, surrounded with cloud and storm. Let me have a glimpse of sunshine, and go about my affairs in serenity and cheerfulness."

Upon entering his study, I was glad that he was not alone, which would have made our meeting more awkward. There were with him, Mr. Steevens and Mr. Tyers, both of whom I now saw for the first time.[1] My note had, on his own reflection, softened him, for he received me very complacently; so that I unexpectedly found myself at ease; and joined in the conversation.

He said, the critics had done too much honour to Sir Richard Blackmore, by writing so much against him. That in his "Creation" he had been helped by various wits, a line by Phillips and a line by Tickell; so that by their aid, and that of others, the poem had been made out.

I defended Blackmore's supposed lines, which have been ridiculed as absolute nonsense:

> "A painted vest Prince Voltiger had on,
> Which from a naked Pict his grandsire won."[2]

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[1] George Steevens (1736—1800), a commentator on Shakespeare. He joined Johnson in preparing the latter's second edition of the Plays for the press in 1770–73, and brought to the works, say the editors of *The Cambridge Shakespeare*, "diligent and methodical habits and great antiquarian knowledge." For Thomas Tyers see *post* in the year 1778.

[2] An acute correspondent of the *European Magazine*, April 1792, has completely exposed a mistake which has been unaccountably frequent in ascribing these lines to Blackmore, notwithstanding that Sir Richard Steele, in that very popular work *The Spectator*, mentions them as written by the author of *The British Princes*, the Hon. Edward Howard. The correspondent above mentioned, shews this mistake to be so inveterate, that not only

I maintained it to be a poetical conceit. A Pict being painted, if he is slain in battle, and a vest is made of his skin, it is a painted vest won from him, though he was naked.

Johnson spoke unfavourably of a certain pretty voluminous author, saying, "He used to write anonymous books, and then other books commending those books, in which there was something of rascality."

I whispered him, "Well, Sir, you are now in good humour." JOHNSON: "Yes, Sir." I was going to leave him, and had got as far as the staircase. He stopped me, and smiling, said, "Get you gone *in;*" a curious mode of inviting me to stay, which I accordingly did for some time longer.

This little incidental quarrel and reconciliation, which, perhaps, I may be thought to have detailed too minutely, must be esteemed as one of many proofs which his friends had, that though he might be charged with *bad humour* at times, he was always a *good-natured* man; and I have heard Sir Joshua Reynolds, a nice and delicate observer of manners, particularly remark, that when upon any occasion Johnson had been rough to any person in company, he took the first opportunity of reconciliation, by drinking to him, or addressing his discourse to him; but if he

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I defended the lines as Blackmore's in the presence of Dr. Johnson, without any contradiction or doubt of their authenticity, but that the Reverend Mr. Whitaker has asserted in print, that he understands they were *suppressed* in the late edition or editions of Blackmore. "After all (says this intelligent writer) it is not unworthy of particular observation, that these lines so often quoted do not exist either in Blackmore or Howard." In *The British Princes*, 8vo. 1669, now before me, p. 96, they stand thus:

> "A vest as admir'd Voltiger had on,
> Which, from this Island's foes, his grandsire won,
> Whose artful colour pass'd the Tyrian dye,
> Oblig'd to triumph in this legacy."

It is probable, I think, that some wag, in order to make Howard still more ridiculous than he really was, has formed the couplet as it now circulates. B.

found his dignified indirect overtures sullenly neglected, he was quite indifferent, and considered himself as having done all that he ought to do, and the other as now in the wrong.

Being to set out for Scotland on the 10th of November, I wrote to him at Streatham, begging that he would meet me in town on the 9th; but if this should be very inconvenient to him, I would go thither. His answer was as follows:

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"DEAR SIR,

"UPON balancing the inconveniences of both parties, I find it will less incommode you to spend your night here, than me to come to town. I wish to see you, and am ordered by the lady of this house to invite you hither. Whether you can come or not, I shall not have any occasion of writing to you again before your marriage, and therefore tell you now, that with great sincerity I wish you happiness. I am, dear Sir, your most affectionate humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"Nov. 9, 1769."

I was detained in town till it was too late on the ninth, so went to him early in the morning of the tenth of November. "Now," said he, "that you are going to marry, do not expect more from life, than life will afford. You may often find yourself out of humour, and you may often think your wife not studious enough to please you; and yet you may have reason to consider yourself as upon the whole very happily married."

Talking of marriage in general, he observed, "Our marriage service is too refined. It is calculated only for the best kind of marriages; whereas, we should have a form for matches of convenience, of which there are many." He agreed with me that there was no absolute necessity for having the marriage ceremony performed by a regular clergyman, for this was not commanded in Scripture.

I was volatile enough to repeat to him a little epigrammatic song of mine on matrimony, which Mr. Garrick

had a few days before procured to be set to music by the very ingenious Mr. Dibden.

A MATRIMONIAL THOUGHT.

"In the blithe days of honeymoon,
With Kate's allurements smitten,
I lov'd her late, I lov'd her soon,
And call'd her dearest kitten.

"But now my kitten's grown a cat,
And cross like other wives,
O! by my soul, my honest Mat,
I fear she has nine lives."

My illustrious friend said, "It is very well, Sir; but you should not swear." Upon which I altered "O! by my soul," to "Alas, alas!"

He was so good as to accompany me to London, and see me into the post-chaise which was to carry me on my road to Scotland. And sure I am, that however inconsiderable many of the particulars recorded at this time may appear to some, they will be esteemed by the best part of my readers as genuine traits of his character, contributing together to give a full, fair, and distinct view of it.

In 1770, he published a political pamphlet, entitled "The False Alarm," intended to justify the conduct of the Ministry and their majority in the House of Commons, for having virtually assumed it as an axiom, that the expulsion of a Member of Parliament was equivalent to exclusion, and thus having declared Colonel Lutterel to be duly elected for the county of Middlesex, notwithstanding Mr. Wilkes had a great majority of votes.[1] This being justly considered as a gross violation of the right of election, an alarm for the Constitution extended

[1] *The False Alarm* was, according to Mrs. Piozzi, Johnson's favourite pamphlet. It was written between 8 p.m. on Wednesday and 12 p.m. on Thursday. Three editions were published between Jan. 16 and March 14.

itself all over the kingdom. To prove this alarm to be false, was the purpose of Johnson's pamphlet; but even his vast powers were inadequate to cope with constitutional truth and reason, and his argument failed of effect; and the House of Commons have since expunged the offensive resolution from their Journals. That the House of Commons might have expelled Mr. Wilkes repeatedly, and as often as he should be rechosen, was not denied; but incapacitation cannot be but by an act of the whole Legislature. It was wonderful to see how a prejudice in favour of government in general, and an aversion to popular clamour, could blind and contract such an understanding as Johnson's, in this particular case; yet the wit, the sarcasm, the eloquent vivacity which this pamphlet displayed, made it be read with great avidity at the time, and it will ever be read with pleasure for the sake of its composition. That it endeavoured to infuse a narcotic indifference, as to public concerns, into the minds of the people, and that it broke out sometimes into an extreme coarseness of contemptuous abuse, is but too evident.

It must not, however, be omitted, that when the storm of his violence subsides, he takes a fair opportunity to pay a grateful compliment to the King, who had rewarded his merit: "These low-born railers have endeavoured, surely without effect, to alienate the affections of the people from the only king who for almost a century has much appeared to desire, or much endeavoured to deserve them." And "Every honest man must lament, that the faction has been regarded with frigid neutrality by the Tories, who being long accustomed to signalize their principles by opposition to the court, do not yet consider, that they have at last a king who knows not the name of party, and who wishes to be the common father of all his people."

To this pamphlet, which was at once discovered to be Johnson's, several answers came out, in which care was taken to remind the public of his former attacks upon government, and of his now being a pensioner, without allowing for the honourable terms upon which Johnson's pension was granted and accepted, or the change of system

which the British court had undergone upon the accession of his present Majesty. He was, however, soothed in the highest strain of panegyric in a poem called "The Remonstrance," by the Reverend Mr. Stockdale, to whom he was, upon many occasions, a kind protector.[1]

The following admirable minute made by him, describes so well his own state, and that of numbers to whom self-examination is habitual, that I cannot omit it:

"June 1, 1770. Every man naturally persuades himself that he can keep his resolutions, nor is he convinced of his imbecility but by length of time and frequency of experiment. This opinion of our own constancy is so prevalent, that we always despise him who suffers his general and settled purpose to be overpowered by an occasional desire. They, therefore, whom frequent failures have made desperate, cease to form resolutions; and they who are become cunning, do not tell them. Those who do not make them are very few, but of their effect little is perceived; for scarcely any man persists in a course of life planned by choice, but as he is restrained from deviation by some external power. He who may live as he will, seldom lives long in the observation of his own rules" (*Prayers and Meditations*, p. 95).

Of this year I have obtained the following letters:

"TO THE REVEREND DR. FARMER, CAMBRIDGE.

"SIR,

"As no man ought to keep wholly to himself any possession that may be useful to the public, I hope you will not think me unreasonably intrusive, if I have recourse to you for such information as you are more able to give me than any other man.

"In support of an opinion which you have already placed above the need of any more support, Mr. Steevens, a very ingenious gentleman, lately of King's College, has collected an account of all the translations which Shakespeare might have seen and used. He wishes his catalogue to be perfect, and therefore entreats that you will favour him by the insertion of such additions as the

[1] Stockdale (1736–1811) was Johnson's neighbour for several years both in the Temple and Bolt Court. He was a dull, morose fellow, who wrote several bad poems (including *The Remonstrance*) and a long tiresome autobiography published in 1808. *Croker.*

accuracy of your inquiries has enabled you to make. To this request, I take the liberty of adding my own solicitation.

"We have no immediate use for this catalogue, and therefore do not desire that it should interrupt or hinder your more important employments. But it will be kind to let us know that you receive it. I am, Sir, &c.

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"Johnson's Court, Fleet Street,
"March 21, 1770."

"TO THE REVEREND MR. THOMAS WARTON.

"DEAR SIR,

"THE readiness with which you were pleased to promise me some notes on Shakespeare, was a new instance of your friendship. I shall not hurry you; but am desired by Mr. Steevens, who helps me in this edition, to let you know, that we shall print the tragedies first, and shall therefore want first the notes which belong to them. We think not to incommode the readers with a supplement; and therefore, what we cannot put into its proper place, will do us no good. We shall not begin to print before the end of six weeks, perhaps not so soon. I am, &c.

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"London, June 23, 1770."

"TO THE REV. DR. JOSEPH WARTON.

"DEAR SIR,

"I AM revising my edition of 'Shakespeare,' and remember that I formerly misrepresented your opinion of Lear. Be pleased to write the paragraph as you would have it, and send it. If you have any remarks of your own upon that or any other play, I shall gladly receive them.

"Make my compliments to Mrs. Warton. I sometimes think of wandering for a few days to Winchester, but am apt to delay. I am, Sir, your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"Sept. 27, 1770."

"TO MR. FRANCIS BARBER, AT MRS. CLAPP'S, BISHOP STORTFORD, HERTFORDSHIRE.

"DEAR FRANCIS,

"I AM at last sat down to write to you, and should very much blame myself for having neglected you so long, if I did not impute that and many other failings to want of health. I hope

not to be so long silent again. I am very well satisfied with your progress, if you can really perform the exercises which you are set; and I hope Mr. Ellis does not suffer you to impose on him, or on yourself.

"Make my compliments to Mr. Ellis, and to Mrs. Clapp, and Mr. Smith.

"Let me know what English books you read for your entertainment. You can never be wise unless you love reading.

"Do not imagine that I shall forget or forsake you; for if, when I examine you, I find that you have not lost your time, you shall want no encouragement from yours affectionately,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"London, Sept. 25, 1770."

"TO THE SAME.

"DEAR FRANCIS,

"I HOPE you mind your business. I design you shall stay with Mrs. Clapp these holidays. If you are invited out you may go, if Mr. Ellis gives leave. I have ordered you some clothes, which you will receive, I believe, next week. My compliments to Mrs. Clapp and to Mr. Ellis and Mr. Smith, &c. I am, your affectionate,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

'December 7, 1770."

During this year there was a total cessation of all correspondence between Dr. Johnson and me, without any coldness on either side, but merely from procrastination, continued from day to day; and as I was not in London, I had no opportunity of enjoying his company and recording his conversation. To supply this blank, I shall present my readers with some *Collectanea*, obligingly furnished to me by the Rev. Dr. Maxwell, of Falkland, in Ireland, some time assistant preacher at the Temple, and for many years the social friend of Johnson, who spoke of him with a very kind regard.

"My acquaintance with that great and venerable character commenced in the year 1754. I was introduced to him by Mr. Grierson,[1] his Majesty's printer at Dublin, a gentleman of

[1] Son of the learned Mrs. Grierson, who was patronized by the late Lord Granville, and was the editor of several of the classics. B.

uncommon learning, and great wit and vivacity. Mr. Grierson died in Germany, at the age of twenty-seven. Dr. Johnson highly respected his abilities, and often observed, that he possessed more extensive knowledge than any man of his years he had ever known. His industry was equal to his talents; and he particularly excelled in every species of philological learning, and was, perhaps, the best critic of the age he lived in.

"I must always remember with gratitude my obligation to Mr. Grierson, for the honour and happiness of Dr. Johnson's acquaintance and friendship, which continued uninterrupted and undiminished to his death: a connexion, that was at once the pride and happiness of my life.

"What pity it is, that so much wit and good sense as he continually exhibited in conversation, should perish unrecorded! Few persons quitted his company without perceiving themselves wiser and better than they were before. On serious subjects he flashed the most interesting conviction upon his auditors; and upon lighter topics, you might have supposed—*Albano Musas de monte locutas* [Hor. *Epist.* II, i. 26].

"Though I can hope to add but little to the celebrity of so exalted a character, by any communications I can furnish, yet out of pure respect to his memory, I will venture to transmit to you some anecdotes concerning him, which fell under my own observation. The very *minutiæ* of such a character must be interesting, and may be compared to the filings of diamonds.

"In politics he was deemed a Tory, but certainly was not so in the obnoxious or party sense of the term: for while he asserted the legal and salutary prerogatives of the crown, he no less respected the constitutional liberties of the people. Whiggism, at the time of the Revolution, he said, was accompanied with certain principles; but latterly, as a mere party distinction under Walpole and the Pelhams, was no better than the politics of stock-jobbers and the religion of infidels.

"He detested the idea of governing by parliamentary corruption, and asserted most strenuously, that a prince steadily and conspicuously pursuing the interests of his people, could not fail of parliamentary concurrence. A prince of ability, he contended, might and should be the directing soul and spirit of his own administration; in short, his own minister, and not the mere head of a party: and then, and not till then, would the royal dignity be sincerely respected.

"Johnson seemed to think, that a certain degree of crown influence over the Houses of Parliament (not meaning a corrupt and shameful dependence), was very salutary, nay, even necessary, in our mixed government. 'For,' said he, 'if the members were

under no crown influence, and disqualified from receiving any gratification from court, and resembled, as they possibly might, Pym and Haslerig, and other stubborn and sturdy members of the Long Parliament, the wheels of government would be totally obstructed. Such men would oppose, merely to shew their power, from envy, jealousy, and perversity of disposition; and not gaining themselves, would hate and oppose all who did: not loving the person of the prince, and conceiving they owed him little gratitude, from the mere spirit of insolence and contradiction, they would oppose and thwart him upon all occasions.'

"The inseparable imperfection annexed to all human governments, consisted, he said, in not being able to create a sufficient fund of virtue and principle to carry the laws into due and effectual execution. Wisdom might plan, but virtue alone could execute. And where could sufficient virtue be found? A variety of delegated, and often discretionary, powers, must be intrusted somewhere; which, if not governed by integrity and conscience, would necessarily be abused, till at last the constable would sell his for a shilling.

"This excellent person was sometimes charged with abetting slavish and arbitrary principles of government. Nothing in my opinion could be a grosser calumny and misrepresentation; for how can it be rationally supposed, that he should adopt such pernicious and absurd opinions, who supported his philosophical character with so much dignity, was extremely jealous of his personal liberty and independence, and could not brook the smallest appearance of neglect or insult, even from the highest personages?

"But let us view him in some instances of more familiar life.

"His general mode of life, during my acquaintance, seemed to be pretty uniform. About twelve o'clock I commonly visited him, and frequently found him in bed, or declaiming over his tea, which he drank very plentifully. He generally had a levee of morning visitors, chiefly men of letters; Hawkesworth, Goldsmith, Murphy, Langton, Steevens, Beauclerk, &c., &c., and sometimes learned ladies; particularly I remember a French lady of wit and fashion doing him the honour of a visit.[1] He seemed to me to be considered as a kind of public oracle, whom everybody thought they had a right to visit and consult; and doubtless they were well rewarded. I never could discover how he found time for his compositions. He declaimed all the morning, then went to dinner at a tavern, where he commonly stayed late, and then

[1] Madame de Boufflers. See *post* in the year 1775.

drank his tea at some friend's house, over which he loitered a great while, but seldom took supper. I fancy he must have read and wrote chiefly in the night, for I can scarcely recollect that he ever refused going with me to a tavern, and he often went to Ranelagh, which he deemed a place of innocent recreation.

"He frequently gave all the silver in his pocket to the poor, who watched him between his house and the tavern where he dined. He walked the streets at all hours, and said he was never robbed, for the rogues knew he had little money, nor had the appearance of having much.

"Though the most accessible and communicative man alive, yet when he suspected he was invited to be exhibited, he constantly spurned the invitation.

"Two young women from Staffordshire visited him when I was present, to consult him on the subject of Methodism, to which they were inclined. 'Come,' said he, 'you pretty fools, dine with Maxwell and me at the Mitre, and we will talk over that subject;' which they did, and after dinner he took one of them upon his knee, and fondled her for half an hour together.

"Upon a visit to me at a country lodging near Twickenham, he asked what sort of society I had there. I told him, but indifferent; as they chiefly consisted of opulent traders, retired from business. He said, he never much liked that class of people; 'For, Sir,' said he, 'they have lost the civility of tradesmen, without acquiring the manners of gentlemen.'

"Johnson was much attached to London: he observed, that a man stored his mind better there, than anywhere else; and that in remote situations a man's body might be feasted, but his mind was starved, and his faculties apt to degenerate, from want of exercise and competition. No place, he said, cured a man's vanity or arrogance, so well as London; for as no man was either great or good *per se*, but as compared with others not so good or great, he was sure to find in the metropolis many his equals, and some his superiors. He observed, that a man in London was in less danger of falling in love indiscreetly, than anywhere else; for there the difficulty of deciding between the conflicting pretensions of a vast variety of objects, kept him safe. He told me, that he had frequently been offered country preferment, if he would consent to take orders; but he could not leave the improved society of the capital, or consent to exchange the exhilarating joys and splendid decorations of public life, for the obscurity, insipidity, and uniformity of remote situations.

"Speaking of Mr. Harte, Canon of Windsor, and writer of 'The History of Gustavus Adolphus,' he much commended him as a scholar, and a man of the most companionable talents he had

ever known. He said, the defects in his history proceeded not from imbecility, but from foppery.[1]

"He loved, he said, the old black letter books; they were rich in matter, though their style was inelegant; wonderfully so, considering how conversant the writers were with the best models of antiquity.

"Burton's 'Anatomy of Melancholy,' he said, was the only book that ever took him out of bed two hours sooner than he wished to rise.

"He frequently exhorted me to set about writing a History of Ireland, and archly remarked, there had been some good Irish writers, and that one Irishman might at least aspire to be equal to another. He had great compassion for the miseries and distresses of the Irish nation, particularly the Papists; and severely reprobated the barbarous debilitating policy of the British government, which, he said, was the most detestable mode of persecution. To a gentleman, who hinted such policy might be necessary to support the authority of the English government, he replied by saying, 'Let the authority of the English government perish, rather than be maintained by iniquity. Better would it be to restrain the turbulence of the natives by the authority of the sword, and to make them amenable to law and justice by an effectual and vigorous police, than to grind them to powder by all manner of disabilities and incapacities. Better,' said he, 'to hang or drown people at once, than by an unrelenting persecution to beggar and starve them.' The moderation and humanity of the present times have, in some measure, justified the wisdom of his observations.

"Dr. Johnson was often accused of prejudices, nay, antipathy, with regard to the natives of Scotland. Surely, so illiberal a prejudice never entered his mind; and it is well known, many natives of that respectable country possessed a large share in his esteem: nor were any of them ever excluded from his good offices, as far as opportunity permitted. True it is, he considered the Scotch, nationally, as a crafty, designing people, eagerly attentive to their own interest, and too apt to overlook the claims and pretensions of other people. 'While they confine their benevolence, in a manner, exclusively to those of their own country, they expect to share in the good offices of other people. Now,' said Johnson, 'this principle is either right or wrong; if

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[1] Walter Harte (1707–74), of St. Mary's Hall, Oxford, had been tutor to Lord Chesterfield's natural son, Philip Stanhope, for whom the famous letters were written. *Croker.*

right, we should do well to imitate such conduct; if wrong, we cannot too much detest it.'

"Being solicited to compose a funeral sermon for the daughter of a tradesman, he naturally inquired into the character of the deceased; and being told she was remarkable for her humility and condescension to inferiors, he observed, that those were very laudable qualities, but it might not be so easy to discover who the lady's inferiors were.

"Of a certain player he remarked, that his conversation usually threatened and announced more than it performed; that he fed you with a continual renovation of hope, to end in a constant succession of disappointment.

"When exasperated by contradiction, he was apt to treat his opponents with too much acrimony: as, 'Sir, you don't see your way through that question:'—'Sir, you talk the language of ignorance.' On my observing to him that a certain gentleman had remained silent the whole evening, in the midst of a very brilliant and learned society, 'Sir,' said he, 'the conversation overflowed, and drowned him.'

"His philosophy, though austere and solemn, was by no means morose and cynical, and never blunted the laudable sensibilities of his character, or exempted him from the influence of the tender passions. Want of tenderness, he always alleged, was want of parts, and was no less a proof of stupidity than depravity.

"Speaking of Mr. Hanway, who published 'An Eight Days' Journey from London to Portsmouth,' 'Jonas,' said he, 'acquired some reputation by travelling abroad, but lost it all by travelling at home.'

"Of the passion of love he remarked, that its violence and ill effects were much exaggerated; for who knows any real sufferings on that head, more than from the exorbitancy of any other passion?

"He much commended Law's 'Serious Call,' which he said was the finest piece of hortatory theology in any language. 'Law,' said he, 'fell latterly into the reveries of Jacob Behmen, whom Law alleged to have been somewhat in the same state with St. Paul, and to have seen *unutterable things*. Were it even so,' said Johnson, 'Jacob would have resembled St. Paul still more, by not attempting to utter them.'[1]

"He observed, that the established clergy in general did not

[1] Jacob Behmen, the mystic shoemaker of Gorlitz. Cf. *Hudibras*, 1, i. 541. Wesley called his writings "inimitable bombast;" F. D. Maurice thought him "a generative thinker." *Dr. Hill.*

preach plain enough; and that polished periods and glittering sentences flew over the heads of the common people, without any impression upon their hearts. Something might be necessary, he observed, to excite the affections of the common people, who were sunk in languor and lethargy, and therefore he supposed that the new concomitants of methodism might probably produce so desirable an effect. The mind, like the body, he observed, delighted in change and novelty, and even in religion itself, courted new appearances and modifications. Whatever might be thought of some methodist teachers, he said, he could scarcely doubt the sincerity of that man, who travelled nine hundred miles in the month, and preached twelve times a week; for no adequate reward, merely temporal, could be given for such indefatigable labour.

"Of Dr. Priestley's theological works, he remarked, that they tended to unsettle everything, and yet settled nothing.

"He was much affected by the death of his mother, and wrote to me to come and assist him to compose his mind, which indeed I found extremely agitated. He lamented that all serious and religious conversation was banished from the society of men, and yet great advantages might be derived from it. All acknowledged, he said, what hardly any body practised, the obligations we were under of making the concerns of eternity the governing principles of our lives. Every man, he observed, at last wishes for retreat: he sees his expectations frustrated in the world, and begins to wean himself from it, and to prepare for everlasting separation.

"He observed, that the influence of London now extended everywhere, and that from all manner of communication being opened, there shortly would be no remains of the ancient simplicity, or places of cheap retreat to be found.

"He was no admirer of blank verse, and said it always failed, unless sustained by the dignity of the subject. In blank verse, he said, the language suffered more distortion, to keep it out of prose, than any inconvenience or limitation to be apprehended from the shackles and circumspection of rhyme.

"He reproved me once for saying grace without mention of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and hoped in future I would be more mindful of the apostolical injunction.

"He refused to go out of a room before me at Mr. Langton's house, saying, he hoped he knew his rank better than to presume to take place of a Doctor in Divinity. I mention such little anecdotes, merely to shew the peculiar turn and habit of his mind.

"He used frequently to observe, that there was more to be endured than enjoyed, in the general condition of human life; and frequently quoted those lines of Dryden:

'Strange cozenage! none would live past years again,
Yet all hope pleasure from what still remain.'

(*Aurungzebe*, iv. 1.)

For his part, he said, he never passed that week in his life which he would wish to repeat, were an angel to make the proposal to him.

"He was of opinion, that the English nation cultivated both their soil and their reason better than any other people; but admitted that the French, though not the highest, perhaps, in any department of literature, yet in every department were very high. Intellectual pre-eminence, he observed, was the highest superiority; and that every nation derived their highest reputation from the splendour and dignity of their writers. Voltaire, he said, was a good narrator, and that his principal merit consisted in a happy selection and arrangement of circumstances.

"Speaking of the French novels, compared with Richardson's, he said, they might be pretty baubles, but a wren was not an eagle.

"In a Latin conversation with the Père Boscovitch, at the house of Mrs. Cholmondeley, I heard him maintain the superiority of Sir Isaac Newton over all foreign philosophers, with a dignity and eloquence that surprised that learned foreigner. It being observed to him, that a rage for every thing English prevailed much in France after Lord Chatham's glorious war, he said, he did not wonder at it, for that we had drubbed those fellows into a proper reverence for us, and that their national petulance required periodical chastisement.

"Lord Lyttelton's 'Dialogues,' he deemed a nugatory performance. 'That man,' said he, 'sat down to write a book, to tell the world what the world had all his life been telling him.'

"Somebody observing that the Scotch Highlanders in the year 1745, had made surprising efforts, considering their numerous wants and disadvantages: 'Yes, Sir,' said he, 'their wants were numerous: but you have not mentioned the greatest of them all,—the want of law.'

"Speaking of the *inward light*, to which some methodists pretended, he said, it was a principle utterly incompatible with social or civil security. 'If a man,' said he, 'pretends to a principle of action of which I can know nothing, nay, not so much as that he has it, but only that he pretends to it; how can I tell what that person may be prompted to do? When a person professes to be governed by a written ascertained law, I can then know where to find him.'

"The poem of Fingal, he said, was a mere unconnected rhap-

sody, a tiresome repetition of the same images. 'In vain shall we look for the *lucidus ordo*, where there is neither end nor object, design or moral, *nec certa recurrit imago*.'

"Being asked by a young nobleman what was become of the gallantry and military spirit of the old English nobility, he replied, 'Why, my Lord, I'll tell you what has become of it: it is gone into the city to look for a fortune.'

"Speaking of a dull tiresome fellow, whom he chanced to meet, he said, 'That fellow seems to me to possess but one idea, and that is a wrong one.'

"Much inquiry having been made concerning a gentleman, who had quitted a company where Johnson was, and no information being obtained; at last Johnson observed, that 'He did not care to speak ill of any man behind his back, but he believed the gentleman was an *attorney*.'

"He spoke with much contempt of the notice taken of Woodhouse, the poetical shoemaker. He said, it was all vanity and childishness: and that such objects were, to those who patronized them, mere mirrors of their own superiority. 'They had better,' said he, 'furnish the man with good implements for his trade, than raise subscriptions for his poems. He may make an excellent shoemaker, but can never make a good poet. A schoolboy's exercise may be a pretty thing for a schoolboy; but it is no treat for a man.'

"Speaking of Boethius, who was the favourite writer of the middle ages, he said it was very surprising, that upon such a subject, and in such a situation, he should be *magis philosophus quam Christianus*.

"Speaking of Arthur Murphy, whom he very much loved, 'I don't know,' said he, 'that Arthur can be classed with the very first dramatic writers; yet at present I doubt much whether we have any thing superior to Arthur.'

"Speaking of the national debt, he said, it was an idle dream to suppose that the country could sink under it. Let the public creditors be ever so clamorous, the interest of millions must ever prevail over that of thousands.

"Of Dr. Kennicott's 'Collations,' he observed, that though the text should not be much mended thereby, yet it was no small advantage to know, that we had as good a text as the most consummate industry and diligence could procure.[1]

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[1] Dr. Benjamin Kennicott (1718–83), a Fellow of Exeter College, Radcliffe Librarian, and Canon of Christ Church, Oxford. His two volumes of *Collations of the Hebrew MSS. of the Old Testament* were published in 1776 and 1783. *Croker*.

"Johnson observed, that so many objections might be made to every thing, that nothing could overcome them but the necessity of doing something. No man would be of any profession, as simply opposed to not being of it: but every one must do something.

"He remarked, that a London parish was a comfortless thing; for the clergyman seldom knew the face of one out of ten parishioners.

"Of the late Mr. Mallet he spoke with no great respect; said, he was ready for any dirty job; and he wrote against Byng at the instigation of the Ministry, and was equally ready to write for him, provided he found his account in it.

"A gentleman who had been very unhappy in marriage, married immediately after his wife died: Johnson said, it was the triumph of hope over experience.

"He observed, that a man of sense and education should meet a suitable companion in a wife. It was a miserable thing when the conversation could only be such as, whether the mutton should be boiled or roasted, and probably a dispute about that.

"He did not approve of late marriages, observing that more was lost in point of time than compensated for by any possible advantages. Even ill assorted marriages were preferable to cheerless celibacy.

"Of old Sheridan he remarked, that he neither wanted parts nor literature; but that his vanity and Quixotism obscured his merits.

"He said, foppery was never cured; it was the bad stamina of the mind, which, like those of the body, were never rectified: once a coxcomb, and always a coxcomb.

"Being told that Gilbert Cooper called him the Caliban of literature: 'Well,' said he, 'I must dub him the Punchinello.'[1]

"Speaking of the old Earl of Cork and Orrery, he said, 'That man spent his life in catching at an object [literary eminence], which he had not power to grasp.'

"To find a substitution for violated morality, he said, was the leading feature in all perversions of religion.

"He often used to quote, with great pathos, those fine lines of Virgil:

> '*Optima quæque dies miseris mortalibus ævi*
> *Prima fugit; subeunt morbi, tristisque senectus,*
> *Et labor, et duræ rapit inclementia mortis.*' (*Georg.* iii. 66.)

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[1] John Gilbert Cooper, author of a *Life of Socrates*, and one of Warburton's many antagonists, was a short, squat fellow. *Croker.*

"Speaking of Homer, whom he venerated as the prince of poets, Johnson remarked that the advice given to Diomed[1] by his father, when he sent him to the Trojan war, was the noblest exhortation that could be instanced in any heathen writer, and comprised in a single line:

Αἰὲν ἀριστεύειν καὶ ὑπείροχον ἔμμεναι ἄλλων:

which, if I recollect well, is translated by Dr. Clarke thus: *Semper appetere præstantissima, et omnibus aliis antecellere.*

"He observed, 'It was a most mortifying reflection for any man to consider, *what he had done*, compared with what *he might have done.*'

"He said few people had intellectual resources sufficient to forego the pleasures of wine. They could not otherwise contrive how to fill the interval between dinner and supper.

"He went with me, one Sunday, to hear my old Master,[2] Gregory Sharpe, preach at the Temple.—In the prefatory prayer, Sharpe ranted about *Liberty*, as a blessing most fervently to be implored, and its continuance prayed for. Johnson observed that our *liberty* was in no sort of danger:—he would have done much better, to pray against our *licentiousness.*

"One evening at Mrs. Montague's, where a splendid company was assembled, consisting of the most eminent literary characters, I thought he seemed highly pleased with the respect and attention that were shewn him, and asked him on our return home, if he was not highly *gratified* by his visit: 'No, Sir,' said he, 'not highly *gratified;* yet I do not recollect to have passed many evenings *with fewer objections.*'

"Though of no high extraction himself, he had much respect for birth and family, especially among ladies. He said, 'Adventitious accomplishments may be possessed by all ranks; but one may easily distinguish the *born gentlewoman.*'

"He said, 'The poor in England were better provided for, than in any other country of the same extent: he did not mean little Cantons, or petty Republics. Where a great proportion of the people,' said he, 'are suffered to languish in helpless misery, that country must be ill policed, and wretchedly governed: a decent provision for the poor is the true test of civilization.—

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[1] The advice was given by Hippolychus to his son Glaucus, *Il.* vi. 208. Clarke's Latin version runs: *Ut semper fortissime rem gererem, et superior virtute essem aliis.* The line is one of the most famous in Homer, "Ever to be best and bravest among men."

[2] That is, Master of the Temple while Maxwell was assistant-preacher. *Croker.*

Gentlemen of education, he observed, were pretty much the same in all countries; the condition of the lower orders, the poor especially, was the true mark of national discrimination.'

"When the corn-laws were in agitation in Ireland, by which that country has been enabled not only to feed itself, but to export corn to a large amount; Sir Thomas Robinson observed, that those laws might be prejudicial to the corn-trade of England. 'Sir Thomas,' said he, 'you talk the language of a savage: what, Sir, would you prevent any people from feeding themselves, if by any honest means they can do it?'

"It being mentioned, that Garrick assisted Dr. Browne, the author of the 'Estimate,' in some dramatic composition, 'No, Sir,' said Johnson; 'he would no more suffer Garrick to write a line in his play, than he would suffer him to mount his pulpit.'[1]

"Speaking of Burke, he said, 'It was commonly observed he spoke too often in parliament; but nobody could say he did not speak well, though too frequently and too familiarly.'

"Speaking of economy, he remarked, it was hardly worth while to save anxiously twenty pounds a year. If a man could save to that degree, so as to enable him to assume a different rank in society, then, indeed, it might answer some purpose.

"He observed, a principal source of erroneous judgment was, viewing things partially and only on *one side:* as for instance, *fortune-hunters*, when they contemplated the fortunes *singly* and *separately*, it was a dazzling and tempting object; but when they came to possess the wives and their fortunes *together*, they began to suspect they had not made quite so good a bargain.

"Speaking of the late Duke of Northumberland living very magnificently when Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, somebody remarked, it would be difficult to find a suitable successor to him: 'then,' exclaimed Johnson, '*he is only fit to succeed himself.*'

"He advised me, if possible, to have a good orchard. He knew, he said, a clergyman of small income, who brought up a family very reputably, which he chiefly fed with apple dumplings.

"He said, he had known several good scholars among the Irish gentlemen; but scarcely any of them correct in *quantity*. He extended the same observation to Scotland.

"Speaking of a certain prelate, who exerted himself very laudably in building churches and parsonage-houses; 'However,' said he,

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[1] Dr. John Browne (1715–66) of St. John's College, Cambridge. Besides his once celebrated *Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Time*, which went through seven editions in a single year, he was the author of two unsuccessful tragedies, *Barbarossa* and *Athelstan*. He died by his own hand in a fit of insanity. *Croker.*

'I do not find that he is esteemed a man of much professional learning, or a liberal patron of it;—yet, it is well, where a man possesses any strong positive excellence.—Few have all kinds of merit belonging to their character. We must not examine matters too deeply.—No, Sir, a *fallible being will fail somewhere.*'

"Talking of the Irish clergy, he said, Swift was a man of great parts, and the instrument of much good to his country.—Berkeley was a profound scholar, as well as a man of fine imagination; but Usher, he said, was the great luminary of the Irish church; and a greater, he added, no church could boast of; at least in modern times.

"We dined *tête-à-tête* at the Mitre, as I was preparing to return to Ireland, after an absence of many years. I regretted much leaving London, where I had formed many agreeable connexions: 'Sir,' said he, 'I don't wonder at it; no man, fond of letters, leaves London without regret. But remember, Sir, you have seen and enjoyed a great deal;—you have seen life in its highest decorations, and the world has nothing new to exhibit.—No man is so well qualified to leave public life as he who has long tried it and known it well. We are always hankering after untried situations, and imagining greater felicity from them than they can afford. No, Sir, knowledge and virtue may be acquired in all countries, and your local consequence will make you some amends for the intellectual gratifications you relinquish.' Then he quoted the following lines with great pathos:

> 'He who has early known the pomps of state,
> (For things unknown, 'tis ignorance to condemn;)
> And after having viewed the gaudy bait,
> Can boldly say, the trifle I contemn;
> With such a one contented could I live,
> Contented could I die.'[1]—

"He then took a most affecting leave of me; said he knew it was a point of *duty* that called me away.—'We shall all be sorry to lose you,' said he: '*laudo tamen.*'"

In 1771 he published another political pamphlet entitled "Thoughts on the late Transactions respecting Falkland's Islands," in which, upon materials furnished to him by the

[1] The lines are from some verses on Retirement in the *London Magazine* for July, 1732, which is merely a transcript, with some slight variations, from a piece by Walsh on the same subject. They are not quite correctly quoted, but as nearly so as they deserve.

Ministry, and upon general topics expanded in his rich style, he successfully endeavoured to persuade the nation that it was wise and laudable to suffer the question of right to remain undecided, rather than involve our country in another war. It has been suggested by some, with what truth I shall not take upon me to decide, that he rated the consequence of those islands to Great Britain too low. But however this may be, every humane mind must surely applaud the earnestness with which he averted the calamity of war; a calamity so dreadful, that it is astonishing how civilized, nay, Christian nations, can deliberately continue to renew it. His description of its miseries in this pamphlet, is one of the finest pieces of eloquence in the English language. Upon this occasion, too, we find Johnson lashing the party in opposition with unbounded severity, and making the fullest use of what he ever reckoned a most effectual argumentative instrument,—contempt. His character of their very able mysterious champion, JUNIUS, is executed with all the force of his genius, and finished with the highest care. He seems to have exulted in sallying forth to single combat against the boasted and formidable hero, who bade defiance to "principalities and powers, and the rulers of this world."

This pamphlet, it is observable, was softened in one particular, after the first edition; for the conclusion of Mr. George Grenville's character stood thus: "Let him not, however, be depreciated in his grave. He had powers not universally possessed: could he have enforced payment of the Manilla ransom, *he could have counted it.*" Which, instead of retaining its sly sharp point, was reduced to a mere flat unmeaning expression, or, if I may use the word,—*truism:* "He had powers not universally possessed: and if he sometimes erred, he was likewise sometimes right."

"TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ.

"DEAR SIR,

"AFTER much lingering of my own, and much of the

Ministry, I have at length got out my paper.[1] But delay is not yet at an end: Not many had been dispersed before Lord North ordered the sale to stop. His reasons I do not distinctly know. You may try to find them in the perusal.[2] Before his order, a sufficient number were dispersed to do all the mischief, though perhaps, not to make all the sport that might be expected from it.

"Soon after your departure, I had the pleasure of finding all the danger past with which your navigation was threatened. I hope nothing happens at home to abate your satisfaction; but that Lady Rothes,[3] and Mrs. Langton, and the young ladies, are all well.

"I was last night at THE CLUB. Dr. Percy has written a long ballad in many *fits;* it is pretty enough.[4] He has printed, and will soon publish it. Goldsmith is at Bath, with Lord Clare.[5] At Mr. Thrale's where I am now writing, all are well. I am, dear Sir, your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"March 20, 1771."

Mr. Strahan, the printer, who had been long in intimacy with Johnson in the course of his literary labours, who was at once his friendly agent in receiving his pension for him, and his banker in supplying him with money when he wanted it; who was himself now a Member of Parliament, and who loved much to be employed in political

[1] "*Thoughts on the late Transactions respecting Falkland's Islands.*" B.

[2] By comparing the first with the subsequent editions, this curious circumstance of ministerial authorship may be discovered. B.

[3] Langton married May 24th, 1770, Jane Lloyd, widow of John, eighth Earl of Rothes. *Malone.*

[4] *The Hermit of Warkworth*, London, 1771. It was on a stanza in this poem that Johnson composed the famous parody:

"I put my hat upon my head,
And walked into the Strand;
And there I met another man
With his hat in his hand."

[5] Robert Nugent, an Irish gentleman, who had married the sister and heiress of Secretary Craggs, was created in 1767 Baron Nugent and Viscount Clare, and in 1777 Earl Nugent. It was to him Goldsmith wrote *The Haunch of Venison;* he himself had a pretty knack in verse. *Croker.*

negotiation; thought he should do eminent service, both to Government and Johnson, if he could be the means of his getting a seat in the House of Commons. With this view, he wrote a letter to one of the Secretaries of the Treasury, of which he gave me a copy in his own handwriting, which is as follows:

"SIR,

"YOU will easily recollect, when I had the honour of waiting upon you some time ago, I took the liberty to observe to you, that Dr. Johnson would make an excellent figure in the House of Commons, and heartily wished he had a seat there. My reasons are briefly these:

"I know his perfect good affection to his Majesty, and his Government, which I am certain he wishes to support by every means in his power.

"He possesses a great share of manly, nervous, and ready eloquence; is quick in discerning the strength and weakness of an argument; can express himself with clearness and precision, and fears the face of no man alive.

"His known character, as a man of extraordinary sense and unimpeached virtue, would secure him the attention of the House, and could not fail to give him a proper weight there.

"He is capable of the greatest application, and can undergo any degree of labour, where he sees it necessary, and where his heart and affections are strongly engaged. His Majesty's Ministers might therefore securely depend on his doing, upon every proper occasion, the utmost that could be expected from him. They would find him ready to vindicate such measures as tended to promote the stability of Government, and resolute and steady in carrying them into execution. Nor is any thing to be apprehended from the supposed impetuosity of his temper. To the friends of the King you will find him a lamb, to his enemies a lion.

"For these reasons, I humbly apprehend that he would be a very able and useful member. And I will venture to say, the employment would not be disagreeable to him; and knowing, as I do, his strong affection to the King, his ability to serve him in that capacity, and the extreme ardour with which I am convinced he would engage in that service, I must repeat, that I wish most heartily to see him in the House.

"If you think this worthy of attention, you will be pleased to take a convenient opportunity of mentioning it to Lord North. If his lordship should happily approve of it, I shall have the satisfaction of having been, in some degree, the humble instrument

of doing my country, in my opinion, a very essential service. I know your good-nature, and your zeal for the public welfare, will plead my excuse for giving you this trouble. I am, with the greatest respect, Sir, your most obedient and humble servant,

"WILLIAM STRAHAN.

"New Street,
"March 30, 1771."

This recommendation, we know, was not effectual; but how, or for what reason, can only be conjectured. It is not to be believed that Mr. Strahan would have applied, unless Johnson had approved of it. I never heard him mention the subject; but at a later period of his life, when Sir Joshua Reynolds told him that Mr. Edmund Burke had said, that if he had come early into Parliament, he certainly would have been the greatest speaker that ever was there, Johnson exclaimed, "I should like to try my hand now."[1]

It has been much agitated among his friends and others, whether he would have been a powerful speaker in Parliament, had he been brought in when advanced in life. I am inclined to think, that his extensive knowledge, his quickness and force of mind, his vivacity and richness of expression, his wit and humour, and above all his poignancy of sarcasm, would have had great effect in a popular assembly; and that the magnitude of his figure, and striking peculiarity of his manner, would have aided the effect. But I remember it was observed by Mr. Flood, that Johnson having been long used to sententious brevity and the short flights of conversation, might have failed in that continued and expanded kind of argument, which is requisite in stating complicated matters in public speaking; and as a proof of this he mentioned the supposed speeches in Parliament written by him for the magazine, none of which, in his opinion,

[1] Hawkins says that Mr. Thrale made a similar attempt, and with no more success. Lord Stowell told Croker that Lord North feared that Johnson's help might have been sometimes embarrassing, and that "like the elephant in the battle, he was quite as likely to trample down his friends as his foes."

were at all like real debates. The opinion of one who was himself so eminent an orator, must be allowed to have great weight. It was confirmed by Sir William Scott, who mentioned, that Johnson had told him, that he had several times tried to speak in the Society of Arts and Sciences, but "had found he could not get on." From Mr. William Gerrard Hamilton I have heard, that Johnson, when observing to him that it was prudent for a man who had not been accustomed to speak in public to begin his speech in as simple a manner as possible, acknowledged that he rose in that society to deliver a speech which he had prepared; "but," said he, "all my flowers of oratory forsook me." I however cannot help wishing, that he *had* "tried his hand" in Parliament; and I wonder that the Ministry did not make the experiment.

I at length renewed a correspondence which had been too long discontinued:

"TO DR. JOHNSON.

"Edinburgh, April 18, 1771.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I CAN now fully understand those intervals of silence in your correspondence with me, which have often given me anxiety and uneasiness; for although I am conscious that my veneration and love for Mr. Johnson have never in the least abated, yet I have deferred for almost a year and a half to write to him." * * *

In the subsequent part of this letter, I gave him an account of my comfortable life as a married man,[1] and a lawyer in practice at the Scotch bar; invited him to Scotland, and promised to attend him to the Highlands and Hebrides.

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"DEAR SIR,

"IF you are now able to comprehend that I might neglect to write without diminution of affection, you have taught me,

[1] Boswell had married, November 25th, 1769, his cousin Margaret Montgomerie. *Dr. Hill.*

likewise, how that neglect may be uneasily felt without resentment. I wished for your letter a long time, and when it came, it amply recompensed the delay. I never was so much pleased as now with your account of yourself; and sincerely hope, that between public business, improving studies, and domestic pleasures, neither melancholy nor caprice will find any place for entrance. Whatever philosophy may determine of material nature, it is certainly true of intellectual nature, that it *abhors a vacuum:* our minds cannot be empty; and evil will break in upon them, if they are not preoccupied by good. My dear Sir, mind your studies, mind your business, make your lady happy, and be a good Christian. After this,

'———————*tristitiam et metus*
Trades protervis in mare Creticum
Portare ventis.' (Hor. Od. i. 26.)

"If we perform our duty, we shall be safe and steady, '*Sive per,*' &c., whether we climb the Highlands, or are tost among the Hebrides; and I hope the time will come when we may try our powers both with cliffs and water. I see but little of Lord Elibank, I know not why; perhaps by my own fault. I am this day going into Staffordshire and Derbyshire for six weeks. I am, dear Sir, your most affectionate, and most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"London, June 20, 1771."

"TO SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS, IN LEICESTER FIELDS.

"DEAR SIR,

"WHEN I came to Lichfield, I found that my portrait had been much visited, and much admired.[1] Every man has a lurking wish to appear considerable in his native place; and I was pleased with the dignity conferred by such a testimony of your regard.

"Be pleased, therefore, to accept the thanks of, Sir, your most obliged, and most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"Ashbourne in Derbyshire,
"July 17, 1771.

"Compliments to Miss Reynolds."

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[1] This was the second of the four portraits that Reynolds painted of Johnson, and the least characteristic.

"TO DR. JOHNSON.

"Edinburgh, July 27, 1771.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"THE bearer of this, Mr. Beattie, Professor of Moral Philosophy at Aberdeen, is desirous of being introduced to your acquaintance. His genius and learning, and labours in the service of virtue and religion, render him very worthy of it; and as he has a high esteem of your character, I hope you will give him a favourable reception. I ever am, &c.

"JAMES BOSWELL."

"TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ., AT LANGTON, NEAR SPILSBY, LINCOLNSHIRE.

"DEAR SIR,

"I AM lately returned from Staffordshire and Derbyshire. The last letter mentions two others which you have written to me since you received my pamphlet. Of these two I never had but one, in which you mentioned a design of visiting Scotland, and, by consequence, put my journey to Langton out of my thoughts. My summer wanderings are now over, and I am engaging in a very great work, the revision of my Dictionary; from which I know not, at present, how to get loose.

"If you have observed, or been told, any errors or omissions, you will do me a great favour by letting me know them.

"Lady Rothes, I find, has disappointed you and herself. Ladies will have these tricks. The Queen and Mrs. Thrale, both ladies of experience, yet both missed their reckoning this summer. I hope, a few months will recompense your uneasiness.

"Please to tell Lady Rothes how highly I value the honour of her invitation, which it is my purpose to obey as soon as I have disengaged myself. In the mean time I shall hope to hear often of her ladyship, and every day better news and better, till I hear that you have both the happiness, which to both is very sincerely wished, by, Sir, your most affectionate, and most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"August 29, 1771."

In October I again wrote to him, thanking him for his last letter, and his obliging reception of Mr. Beattie; informing him that I had been at Alnwick lately, and had good accounts of him from Dr. Percy.

In his religious record of this year we observe that he was better than usual, both in body and mind, and better

satisfied with the regularity of his conduct. But he is still "trying his ways" too rigorously. He charges himself with not rising early enough; yet he mentions what was surely a sufficient excuse for this, supposing it to be a duty seriously required, as he all his life appears to have thought it. "One great hindrance is want of rest; my nocturnal complaints grow less troublesome towards morning; and I am tempted to repair the deficiencies of the night." (*Pr. and Med.* 101.) Alas! how hard would it be, if this indulgence were to be imputed to a sick man as a crime. In his retrospect on the following Easter-eve, he says, "When I review the last year, I am able to recollect so little done, that shame and sorrow, though perhaps too weakly, come upon me." Had he been judging of any one else in the same circumstances, how clear would he have been on the favourable side. How very difficult, and in my opinion almost constitutionally impossible it was for him to be raised early, even by the strongest resolutions, appears from a note in one of his little paper-books (containing words arranged for his Dictionary), written, I suppose about 1753: "I do not remember that since I left Oxford, I ever rose early by mere choice, but once or twice at Edial, and two or three times for the 'Rambler.'" I think he had fair ground enough to have quieted his mind on the subject, by concluding that he was physically incapable of what is at best but a commodious regulation.

In 1772 he was altogether quiescent as an author; but it will be found, from the various evidences which I shall bring together, that his mind was acute, lively, and vigorous.

"TO SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

"DEAR SIR,

"BE pleased to send to Mr. Banks, whose place of residence I do not know, this note, which I have sent open, that, if you please, you may read it.

"When you send it, do not use your own seal.

"I am, Sir, your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"Feb. 27, 1772."

"TO JOSEPH BANKS, ESQ.

"'*Perpetua ambita bis terra præmia lactis*
Hæc habet altrici Capra Secunda Jovis.'[1]

"SIR,

"I RETURN thanks to you and to Dr. Solander for the pleasure which I received in yesterday's conversation. I could not recollect a motto for your Goat, but have given her one. You, Sir, may perhaps have an epic poem from some happier pen than, Sir, your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"Johnson's Court, Fleet Street,
"Feb. 27, 1772."

"TO DR. JOHNSON.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"IT is hard that I cannot prevail on you to write to me oftener. But I am convinced that it is in vain to expect from you a private correspondence with any regularity. I must, therefore, look upon you as a fountain of wisdom, from whence few rills are communicated to a distance, and which must be approached at its source, to partake fully of its virtues.

* * * * * *

"I am coming to London soon, and am to appear in an appeal from the Court of Session in the House of Lords. A schoolmaster in Scotland was, by a Court of inferior jurisdiction, deprived of his office, for being somewhat severe in the chastisement of his scholars. The Court of Session considering it to be dangerous to the interest of learning and education, to lessen the dignity of teachers, and make them afraid of too indulgent parents, instigated by the complaints of their children, restored him. His enemies have appealed to the House of Lords, though the salary is only twenty pounds a year. I was counsel for him here. I hope there will be little fear of a reversal; but I must beg to have your

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[1] Thus translated by a friend:

"In fame scarce second to the nurse of Jove,
This Goat, who twice the world had traversed round,
Deserving both her master's care and love,
Ease and perpetual pasture now has found." B.

aid in my plan of supporting the decree. It is a general question, and not a point of particular law.

* * * * * * *

"I am, &c.
"JAMES BOSWELL."

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"DEAR SIR,

"THAT you are coming so soon to town I am very glad; and still more glad that you are coming as an advocate. I think nothing more likely to make your life pass happily away, than the consciousness of your own value, which eminence in your profession will certainly confer. If I can give you any collateral help, I hope you do not suspect that it will be wanting. My kindness for you has neither the merit of singular virtue, nor the reproach of singular prejudice. Whether to love you be right or wrong, I have many on my side: Mrs. Thrale loves you, and Mrs. Williams loves you, and what would have inclined me to love you, if I had been neutral before, you are a great favourite of Dr. Beattie.

"Of Dr. Beattie I should have thought much, but that his lady puts him out of my head: she is a very lovely woman.

"The ejection which you come hither to oppose, appears very cruel, unreasonable, and oppressive. I should think there could not be much doubt of your success.

"My health grows better, yet I am not fully recovered. I believe it is held, that men do not recover very fast after threescore. I hope yet to see Beattie's College: and have not given up the western voyage. But however all this may be or not, let us try to make each other happy when we meet, and not refer our pleasure to distant times or distant places.

"How comes it that you tell me nothing of your lady? I hope to see her some time, and till then shall be glad to hear of her.

"I am, dear Sir, &c.
"SAM. JOHNSON.

"March 15, 1772."

"TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ., NEAR SPILSBY, LINCOLNSHIRE.

"DEAR SIR,

"I CONGRATULATE you and Lady Rothes on your little man, and hope you will all be many years happy together.

"Poor Miss Langton can have little part in the joy of her

family. She this day called her aunt Langton to receive the sacrament with her; and made me talk yesterday on such subjects as suit her condition. It will probably be her *viaticum*. I surely need not mention again that she wishes to see her mother.

"I am, Sir, your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"March 14, 1772."

On the 21st of March, I was happy to find myself again in my friend's study, and was glad to see my old acquaintance, Mr. Francis Barber, who was now returned home. Dr. Johnson received me with a hearty welcome; saying, "I am glad you are come, and glad you are come upon such an errand:" (alluding to the cause of the schoolmaster.) BOSWELL: "I hope, Sir, he will be in no danger. It is a very delicate matter to interfere between a master and his scholars: nor do I see how you can fix the degree of severity that a master may use." JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, till you can fix the degree of obstinacy and negligence of the scholars, you cannot fix the degree of severity of the master. Severity must be continued until obstinacy be subdued, and negligence be cured." He mentioned the severity of Hunter, his own master. "Sir," said I, "Hunter is a Scotch name: so it should seem this schoolmaster who beat you so severely, was a Scotchman. I can now account for your prejudice against the Scotch." JOHNSON: "Sir, he was not Scotch: and, abating his brutality, he was a very good master."

We talked of his two political pamphlets, "The False Alarm," and "Thoughts concerning Falkland's Islands." JOHNSON: "Well, Sir, which of them did you think the best?" BOSWELL: "I liked the second best." JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, I like the first best; and Beattie liked the first best. Sir, there is a subtlety of disquisition in the first, that is worth all the fire of the second." BOSWELL: "Pray, Sir, is it true that Lord North paid you a visit, and that you got two hundred a year in addition to your pension?" JOHNSON: "No, Sir. Except what I had from the bookseller, I did not get a farthing by them. And, between you and me, I believe Lord North is no

friend to me." BOSWELL: "How so, Sir?" JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, you cannot account for the fancies of men.—Well, how does Lord Elibank? and how does Lord Monboddo?" BOSWELL: "Very well, Sir. Lord Monboddo still maintains the superiority of the savage life." JOHNSON: "What strange narrowness of mind now is that, to think the things we have not known are better than the things which we have known." BOSWELL: "Why, Sir, that is a common prejudice." JOHNSON: "Yes, Sir, but a common prejudice should not be found in one whose trade it is to rectify error."

A gentleman having come in who was to go as a mate in the ship along with Mr. Banks and Dr. Solander, Dr. Johnson asked what were the names of the ships destined for the expedition. The gentleman answered, they were once to be called the Drake and the Raleigh, but now they were to be called the Resolution and the Adventure. JOHNSON: "Much better; for had the Raleigh[1] returned without going round the world, it would have been ridiculous. To give them the names of the Drake and the Raleigh was laying a trap for satire." BOSWELL: "Had not you some desire to go upon this expedition, Sir?" JOHNSON: "Why yes, but I soon laid it aside. Sir, there is very little of intellectual in the course. Besides, I see but at a small distance. So it was not worth my while to go to see birds fly, which I should not have seen fly; and fishes swim, which I should not have seen swim."

The gentleman being gone, and Dr. Johnson having left the room for some time, a debate arose between the Reverend Mr. Stockdale and Mrs. Desmoulins, whether Mr. Banks and Dr. Solander were entitled to any share of glory from their expedition. When Dr. Johnson returned to us, I told him the subject of their dispute. JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, it was properly for botany that they went out: I believe they thought only of culling of simples."[2]

[1] Evidently a slip of the pen for Drake. Johnson, who had written Drake's life, was not likely to confuse him with Raleigh.

[2] Neither Mr. Banks nor Dr. Solander went with the expedition,

I thanked him for showing civilities to Beattie. "Sir," said he, "I should thank *you*. We all love Beattie. Mrs. Thrale says, if ever she has another husband, she'll have Beattie. He sunk upon us[1] that he was married; else we should have shewn his lady more civilities. She is a very fine woman. But how can you shew civilities to a nonenity? I did not think he had been married. Nay,

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owing to their not considering their ship, the *Endeavour*, seaworthy. See *Ann. Reg.* 1772. *Croker.*

[1] "TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"Edinburgh, May 3, 1792.

"MY DEAR SIR,—As I suppose your great work will soon be reprinted, I beg leave to trouble you with a remark on a passage of it, in which I am a little misrepresented. Be not alarmed; the misrepresentation is not imputable to you. Not having the book at hand, I cannot specify the page, but I suppose you will easily find it. Dr. Johnson says, speaking of Mrs. Thrale's family, 'Dr. Beattie *sunk upon us* that he was married,' or words to that purpose. I am not sure that I understand *sunk upon us*, which is a very uncommon phrase: but it seems to me to imply (and others, I find, have understood it in the same sense), *studiously concealed from us his being married.* Now, Sir, this was by no means the case. I could have no motive to conceal a circumstance, of which I never was nor can be ashamed; and of which Dr. Johnson seemed to think, when he afterwards became acquainted with Mrs. Beattie, that I had, as was true, reason to be proud. So far was I from concealing her, that my wife had at that time almost as numerous an acquaintance in London as I had myself; and was not very long after, kindly invited and elegantly entertained at Streatham by Mr. and Mrs. Thrale. My request, therefore, is, that you would rectify this matter in your new edition. You are at liberty to make what use you please of this letter. My best wishes ever attend you and your family. Believe me to be, with the utmost regard and esteem, dear Sir, your obliged and affectionate humble servant, J. BEATTIE."

I have, from my respect for my friend, Dr. Beattie, and regard to his extreme sensibility, inserted the foregoing letter, though I cannot but wonder at his considering as any imputation a phrase commonly used among the best friends. B.

I did not think about it one way or other; but he did not tell us of his lady till late."

He then spoke of St. Kilda, the most remote of the Hebrides. I told him, I thought of buying it. JOHNSON: "Pray do, Sir. We will go and pass a winter amid the blasts there. We shall have fine fish, and we will take some dried tongues with us, and some books. We will have a strong-built vessel, and some Orkney men to navigate her. We must build a tolerable house: but we may carry with us a wooden house ready made, and requiring nothing but to be put up. Consider, Sir, by buying St. Kilda, you may keep the people from falling into worse hands. We must give them a clergyman, and he shall be one of Beattie's choosing. He shall be educated at Marischal College. I'll be your Lord Chancellor, or what you please." BOSWELL: "Are you serious, Sir, in advising me to buy St. Kilda? for if you should advise me to go to Japan, I believe I should do it." JOHNSON: "Why yes, Sir, I am serious." BOSWELL: "Why then I'll see what can be done."

I gave him an account of the two parties in the Church of Scotland, those for supporting the rights of patrons, independent of the people, and those against it. JOHNSON: "It should be settled one way or other. I cannot wish well to a popular election of the clergy, when I consider that it occasions such animosities, such unworthy courting of the people, such slanders between the contending parties, and other disadvantages. It is enough to allow the people to remonstrate against the nomination of a minister for solid reasons." (I suppose he meant heresy or immorality.)

He was engaged to dine abroad, and asked me to return to him in the evening at nine, which I accordingly did.

We drank tea with Mrs. Williams, who told us a story of second sight, which happened in Wales, where she was born.—He listened to it very attentively, and said he should be glad to have some instances of that faculty well authenticated. His elevated wish for more and more evidence for spirit, in opposition to the grovelling belief of materialism, led him to a love of such mysterious

disquisitions. He again justly observed, that we could have no certainty of the truth of supernatural appearances, unless something was told us which we could not know by ordinary means, or something done which could not be done but by supernatural power; that Pharaoh in reason and justice required such evidence from Moses; nay, that our Saviour said, "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin." He had said in the morning, that Macaulay's "History of St. Kilda" was very well written, except some foppery about liberty and slavery. I mentioned to him that Macaulay told me, he was advised to leave out of his book the wonderful story that upon the approach of a stranger all the inhabitants catch cold;[1] but that it had been so well authenticated, he determined to retain it. JOHNSON: "Sir, to leave things out of a book, merely because people tell you they will not be believed, is meanness. Macaulay acted with more magnanimity."

We talked of the Roman Catholic religion and how little difference there was in essential matters between ours and it. JOHNSON: "True, Sir; all denominations of Christians have really little difference in point of doctrine, though they may differ widely in external forms. There is a prodigious difference between the external form of one of your Presbyterian churches in Scotland, and a church in Italy; yet the doctrine taught is essentially the same."

I mentioned the petition to Parliament for removing the subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles. JOHNSON: "It was soon thrown out. Sir, they talk of not making boys at the University subscribe to what they do not understand; but they ought to consider, that our Universities were founded to bring up members for the Church of England, and we must not supply our enemies with arms from our arsenal. No, Sir, the meaning of subscribing is, not that they fully understand all the articles, but that they will adhere to the Church of England. Now take it

[1] See p. 409.

in this way, and suppose that they should only subscribe their adherence to the Church of England, there would be still the same difficulty; for still the young men would be subscribing to what they do not understand. For if you should ask them, what do you mean by the Church of England? Do you know in what it differs from the Presbyterian Church? from the Romish Church? from the Greek Church? from the Coptic Church? they could not tell you. So, Sir, it comes to the same thing." BOSWELL: "But, would it not be sufficient to subscribe the Bible?" JOHNSON: "Why no, Sir; for all sects will subscribe the Bible; nay, the Mahometans will subscribe the Bible; for the Mahometans acknowledge JESUS CHRIST, as well as Moses, but maintain that GOD sent Mahomet as a still greater prophet than either."

I mentioned the motion which had been made in the House of Commons, to abolish the fast of the 30th of January. JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, I could have wished that it had been a temporary act, perhaps, to have expired with the century. I am against abolishing it; because that would be declaring it wrong to establish it; but I should have no objection to make an act, continuing it for another century, and then letting it expire." [1]

He disapproved of the Royal Marriage Bill; "Because," said he, "I would not have the people think that the validity of marriage depends on the will of man, or that the right of a king depends on the will of man. I should not have been against making the marriage of any of the royal family without the approbation of King and Parliament, highly criminal."

In the morning we had talked of old families, and the respect due to them. JOHNSON: "Sir, you have a right to that kind of respect, and are arguing for yourself. I am for supporting the principle, and am disinterested in doing it, as I have no such right." BOSWELL: "Why, Sir, it is one more incitement to a man to do well."

[1] It was abolished by Royal Warrant on Jan. 17th, 1859, together with the fasts for May 29th and Nov. 5th. *Napier.*

JOHNSON: "Yes, Sir, and it is a matter of opinion, very necessary to keep society together. What is it but opinion, by which we have a respect for authority, that prevents us, who are the rabble, from rising up and pulling down you who are gentlemen from your places, and saying 'We will be gentlemen in our turn'? Now, Sir, that respect for authority is much more easily granted to a man whose father has had it, than to an upstart, and so society is more easily supported." "BOSWELL: "Perhaps, Sir, it might be done by the respect belonging to office, as among the Romans, where the dress, the *toga*, inspired reverence." JOHNSON: "Why, we know very little about the Romans. But, surely, it is much easier to respect a man who has always had respect than to respect a man who we know was last year no better than ourselves, and will be no better next year. In Republics there is no respect for authority, but a fear of power." BOSWELL: "At present, Sir, I think riches seem to gain most respect." JOHNSON: "No, Sir, riches do not gain hearty respect; they only procure external attention. A very rich man, from low beginnings, may buy his election in a borough; but, *cæteris paribus*, a man of family will be preferred. People will prefer a man for whose father their fathers have voted, though they should get no more money, or even less. That shews that the respect for family is not merely fanciful, but has an actual operation. If gentlemen of family would allow the rich upstarts to spend their money profusely, which they are ready enough to do, and not vie with them in expense, the upstarts would soon be at an end, and the gentlemen would remain; but if the gentlemen will vie in expense with the upstarts, which is very foolish, they must be ruined."

I gave him an account of the excellent mimicry of a friend of mine in Scotland; observing, at the same time, that some people thought it a very mean thing. JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, it is making a very mean use of man's powers. But to be a good mimic, requires great powers; great acuteness of observation, great retention of what is observed, and great pliancy of organs, to represent what is

observed. I remember a lady of quality in this town, Lady ——, who was a wonderful mimic, and used to make me laugh immoderately. I have heard she is now gone mad." BOSWELL: "It is amazing how a mimic can not only give you the gestures and voice of a person whom he represents; but even what a person would say on any particular subject." JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, you are to consider that the manner and some particular phrases of a person do much to impress you with an idea of him, and you are not sure that he would say what the mimic says in his character." BOSWELL: "I don't think Foote a good mimic, Sir." JOHNSON: "No, Sir; his imitations are not like. He gives you something different from himself, but not the character which he means to assume. He goes out of himself, without going into other people. He cannot take off any person unless he is strongly marked, such as George Faulkner.[1] He is like a painter who can draw the portrait of a man who has a wen upon his face, and who therefore is easily known. If a man hops upon one leg, Foote can hop upon one leg. But he has not that nice discrimination which your friend seems to possess. Foote is, however, very entertaining with a kind of conversation between wit and buffoonery."

On Monday, March 23, I found him busy, preparing a fourth edition of his folio Dictionary. Mr. Peyton, one of his original amanuenses, was writing for him. I put him in mind of a meaning of the word *side*, which he had omitted, viz. relationship; as father's side, mother's side. He inserted it. I asked him if *humiliating* was a good word. He said, he had seen it frequently used, but he did not know it to be legitimate English. He would not admit *civilization*, but only *civility*. With great deference to him I thought *civilization*, from *to civilize*, better in the sense opposed to *barbarity*, than *civility;* as it is better to have a distinct word for each sense, than one

[1] The printer and publisher of the *Dublin Journal*. He was the only man, says Cumberland in his Memoirs, whom Foote's extravagant pencil could not caricature.

word with two senses, which *civility* is in his way of using it.

He seemed also to be intent on some sort of chemical operation. I was entertained by observing how he contrived to send Mr. Peyton on an errand, without seeming to degrade him; "Mr. Peyton,—Mr. Peyton, will you be so good as to take a walk to Temple Bar? You will there see a chemist's shop, at which you will be pleased to buy for me an ounce of oil of vitriol; not spirit of vitriol, but oil of vitriol. It will cost three half-pence." Peyton immediately went, and returned with it, and told him it cost but a penny.

I then reminded him of the schoolmaster's cause, and proposed to read to him the printed papers concerning it. "No, Sir," said he, "I can read quicker than I can hear." So he read them to himself.

After he had read for some time, we were interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Kristrom, a Swede, who was tutor to some young gentleman in the city. He told me, that there was a very good History of Sweden, by Daline. Having at that time an intention of writing the history of that country, I asked Dr. Johnson whether one might write a history of Sweden, without going thither. "Yes, Sir," said he, "one for common use."

We talked of languages. Johnson observed that Leibnitz had made some progress in a work, tracing all languages up to the Hebrew. "Why, Sir," said he, "you would not imagine that the French *jour*, day, is derived from the Latin *dies*, and yet nothing is more certain; and the intermediate steps are very clear. From *dies*, comes *diurnus*. *Diu* is, by inaccurate ears, or inaccurate pronunciation, easily confounded with *giu;* then the Italians form a substantive of the ablative of an adjective, and thence *giurno*, or, as they make it, *giorno:* which is readily contracted into *giour*, or *jour*." He observed, that the Bohemian language was true Sclavonic. The Swede said, it had some similarity with the German. Johnson: "Why, Sir, to be sure, such parts of Sclavonia as confine with Germany will borrow German words; and

such parts as confine with Tartary will borrow Tartar words."

He said, he never had it properly ascertained that the Scotch Highlanders and the Irish understood each other. I told him that my cousin, Colonel Graham, of the Royal Highlanders, whom I met at Drogheda, told me they did. JOHNSON: "Sir, if the Highlanders understood Irish, why translate the New Testament into Erse, as was lately done at Edinburgh, when there is an Irish translation?" BOSWELL: "Although the Erse and Irish are both dialects of the same language, there may be a good deal of diversity between them, as between the different dialects in Italy."—The Swede went away, and Mr. Johnson continued his reading of the papers. I said, "I am afraid, Sir, it is troublesome."—"Why, Sir," said he, "I do not take much delight in it; but I'll go through it."

We went to the Mitre, and dined in the room where he and I first supped together. He gave me great hopes of my cause. "Sir," said he, "the government of a schoolmaster is somewhat of the nature of military government; that is to say, it must be arbitrary, it must be exercised by the will of one man, according to particular circumstances. You must shew some learning upon this occasion. You must shew, that a schoolmaster has a prescriptive right to beat; and that an action of assault and battery cannot be admitted against him unless there is some great excess, some barbarity. This man has maimed none of his boys. They are all left with the full exercise of their corporeal faculties. In our schools in England, many boys have been maimed; yet I never heard of an action against a schoolmaster on that account. Puffendorff, I think, maintains the right of a schoolmaster to beat his scholars."

On Saturday, March 27, I introduced to him Sir Alexander Macdonald,[1] with whom he had expressed a wish to be acquainted. He received him very courteously.

[1] He succeeded his brother Sir James Macdonald, (for whom see p. 330) as eighth baronet, and in 1776 was raised to the Irish peerage as Lord Macdonald. He is frequently mentioned in the *Tour to the Hebrides.*

Sir Alexander observed, that the Chancellors in England are chosen from views much inferior to the office, being chosen from temporary political views. JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, in such a government as ours, no man is appointed to an office because he is the fittest for it, nor hardly in any other government; because there are so many connexions and dependencies to be studied. A despotic prince may choose a man to an office, merely because he is the fittest for it. The King of Prussia may do it." SIR A.: "I think, Sir, almost all great lawyers, such at least as have written upon law, have known only law, and nothing else." JOHNSON: "Why no, Sir; Judge Hale was a great lawyer, and wrote upon law; and yet he knew a great many other things, and has written other things. Selden too." SIR A.: "Very true, Sir; and Lord Bacon. But was not Lord Coke a mere lawyer?" JOHNSON: "Why, I am afraid he was; but he would have taken it very ill if you had told him so. He would have prosecuted you for scandal." BOSWELL: "Lord Mansfield is not a mere lawyer." JOHNSON: "No, Sir. I never was in Lord Mansfield's company; but Lord Mansfield was distinguished at the University. Lord Mansfield, when he first came to town, 'drank champagne with the wits,' as Prior says. He was the friend of Pope." SIR A.: "Barristers, I believe, are not so abusive now as they were formerly. I fancy they had less law long ago, and so were obliged to take to abuse, to fill up the time. Now they have such a number of precedents, they have no occasion for abuse." JOHNSON: "Nay, Sir, they had more law long ago than they have now. As to precedents, to be sure they will increase in course of time; but the more precedents there are, the less occasion is there for law; that is to say, the less occasion is there for investigating principles." SIR A.: "I have been correcting several Scotch accents in my friend Boswell. I doubt, Sir, if any Scotchman ever attains to a perfect English pronunciation." JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, few of them do, because they do not persevere after acquiring a certain degree of it. But, Sir, there can be no doubt that they may attain to a

perfect English pronunciation, if they will. We find how near they come to it; and certainly, a man who conquers nineteen parts of the Scottish accent, may conquer the twentieth. But, Sir, when a man has got the better of nine-tenths he grows weary, he relaxes his diligence, he finds he has corrected his accent so far as not to be disagreeable, and he no longer desires his friends to tell him when he is wrong; nor does he choose to be told. Sir, when people watch me narrowly, and I do not watch myself, they will find me out to be of a particular county. In the same manner, Dunning may be found out to be a Devonshire man.[1] So most Scotchmen may be found out. But, Sir, little aberrations are of no disadvantage. I never catched Mallet in a Scotch accent; and yet Mallet, I suppose, was past five-and-twenty before he came to London."[2]

Upon another occasion I talked to him on this subject, having myself taken some pains to improve my pronunciation, by the aid of the late Mr. Love, of Drury Lane theatre, when he was a player at Edinburgh, and also of old Mr. Sheridan. Johnson said to me, "Sir, your pronunciation is not offensive." With this concession I was pretty well satisfied; and let me give my countrymen of North Britain an advice not to aim at absolute perfection in this respect; not to speak *High English*, as we are apt to call what is far removed from the *Scotch*, but which is by no means *good English*, and makes "the fools who use it" truly ridiculous. Good English is plain, easy, and smooth in the mouth of an unaffected English gentleman. A studied and factitious pronunciation, which requires perpetual attention, and imposes perpetual constraint, is exceedingly disgusting. A small intermixture of provincial peculiarities may, perhaps, have an agreeable effect, as the notes of different birds concur in the harmony of the grove, and please more than if they were all exactly alike. I could name some gentlemen of Ireland, to whom a slight proportion of the accent and recitative of that

[1] John Dunning (1731–83), first Lord Ashburton.

[2] Mallet got rid of his Scotch name, Malloch, with his Scotch accent.

country is an advantage. The same observation will apply to the gentlemen of Scotland. I do not mean that we should speak as broad as a certain prosperous Member of Parliament from that country; though it has been well observed, that "it has been of no small use to him; as it rouses the attention of the House by its uncommonness: and is equal to tropes and figures in a good English speaker."[1] I would give as an instance of what I mean to recommend to my countrymen, the pronunciation of the late Sir Gilbert Elliot;[2] and may I presume to add that of the present Earl of Marchmont,[3] who told me, with great good humour, that the master of a shop in London, where he was not known, said to him, "I suppose, Sir, you are an American."—"Why so, Sir?" said his Lordship. "Because, Sir," replied the shopkeeper, "you speak neither English nor Scotch, but something different from both, which I conclude is the language of America."

BOSWELL: "It may be of use, Sir, to have a Dictionary to ascertain the pronunciation." JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, my Dictionary shews you the accent of words, if you can but remember them." BOSWELL: "But, Sir, we want marks to ascertain the pronunciation of the vowels. Sheridan, I believe, has finished such a work." JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, consider how much easier it is to learn a language by the ear, than by any marks. Sheridan's Dictionary may do very well; but you cannot always carry it about with you: and, when you want the word, you have not the Dictionary. It is like a man who has a sword that will not draw. It is an admirable sword, to be sure: but while your enemy is cutting your throat, you are unable to use it. Besides, Sir, what entitles Sheridan to fix the pronunciation of English? He has, in the first place, the disadvantage of being an Irishman:

[1] Henry Dundas, Viscount Melville, whose accent and many of whose phrases were to the last peculiarly national. *Croker.*

[2] Father of the first Earl of Minto; he wrote the pretty pastoral, "My Sheep I neglected," quoted in the note to *The Lay of the Last Minstrel. Lockhart.*

[3] The friend and executor of Pope. *Croker.*

and if he says he will fix it after the example of the best company, why they differ among themselves. I remember an instance: when I published the Plan for my Dictionary, Lord Chesterfield told me that the word *great* should be pronounced so as to rhyme to *state;* and Sir William Yonge sent me word that it should be pronounced so as to rhyme to *seat*, and that none but an Irishman would pronounce it *grait.* Now here were two men of the highest rank, the one the best speaker in the House of Lords, the other the best speaker in the House of Commons, differing entirely."

I again visited him at night. Finding him in a very good humour, I ventured to lead him to the subject of our situation in a future state, having much curiosity to know his notions on that point. JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, the happiness of an unembodied spirit will consist in a consciousness of the favour of GOD, in the contemplation of truth, and in the possession of felicitating ideas." BOSWELL: "But, Sir, is there any harm in our forming to ourselves conjectures as to the particulars of our happiness, though the Scripture has said but very little on the subject? 'We know not what we shall be.'" JOHNSON: "Sir, there is no harm. What philosophy suggests to us on this topic is probable: what Scripture tells us is certain. Dr. Henry More has carried it as far as philosophy can.[1] You may buy both his theological and philosophical works in two volumes folio, for about eight shillings." BOSWELL: "One of the most pleasing thoughts is, that we shall see our friends again." JOHNSON: "Yes, Sir; but you must consider, that when we are become purely rational, many of our friendships will be cut off. Many friendships are formed by a community of sensual pleasures: all these will be cut off. We form many friendships with bad men, because they have agree-

[1] Known as the Platonist, from his efforts to blend the Platonic philosophy with Christianity. Johnson used to laugh at him as a visionary, and quote, as Hawkins relates, a ridiculous passage from one of his writings about eternity shaking hands with opacity. *Dr. Hill.*

able qualities, and they can be useful to us; but, after death, they can no longer be of use to us. We form many friendships by mistake, imagining people to be different from what they really are. After death, we shall see every one in a true light. Then, Sir, they talk of our meeting our relations: but then all relationship is dissolved; and we shall have no regard for one person more than another, but for their real value. However, we shall either have the satisfaction of meeting our friends, or be satisfied without meeting them." BOSWELL: "Yet, Sir, we see in Scripture, that Dives still retained an anxious concern about his brethren." JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, we must either suppose that passage to be metaphorical, or hold with many divines, and all the Purgatorians, that departed souls do not all at once arrive at the utmost perfection of which they are capable." BOSWELL: "I think, Sir, that is a very rational supposition." JOHNSON: "Why, yes, Sir; but we do not know it is a true one. There is no harm in believing it: but you must not compel others to make it an article of faith; for it is not revealed." BOSWELL: "Do you think, Sir, it is wrong in a man who holds the doctrine of Purgatory, to pray for the souls of his deceased friends?" JOHNSON: "Why, no, Sir." BOSWELL: "I have been told, that in the Liturgy of the Episcopal Church of Scotland, there was a form of prayer for the dead." JOHNSON: "Sir, it is not in the Liturgy which Laud framed for the Episcopal Church of Scotland: if there is a liturgy older than that, I should be glad to see it." BOSWELL: "As to our employment in a future state, the sacred writings say little. The Revelation, however, of St. John gives us many ideas, and particularly mentions music." JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, ideas must be given you by means of something which you know: and as to music there are some philosophers and divines who have maintained that we shall not be spiritualized to such a degree, but that something of matter, very much refined, will remain. In that case, music may make a part of our future felicity."

BOSWELL: "I do not know whether there are any well-

attested stories of the appearance of ghosts. You know there is a famous story of the appearance of Mrs. Veal, prefixed to 'Drelincourt on Death.'" JOHNSON: "I believe, Sir, that is given up. I believe the woman declared upon her death-bed that it was a lie."[1] BOSWELL: "This objection is made against the truth of ghosts appearing: that if they are in a state of happiness, it would be a punishment to them to return to this world; and if they are in a state of misery, it would be giving them a respite." JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, as the happiness or misery of unembodied spirits does not depend upon place, but is intellectual, we cannot say that they are less happy or less miserable by appearing upon earth."

We went down between twelve and one to Mrs. Williams's room, and drank tea. I mentioned that we were to have the remains of Mr. Gray, in prose and verse, published by Mr. Mason. JOHNSON: "I think we have had enough of Gray. I see they have published a splendid edition of Akenside's works. One bad ode may be suffered; but a number of them together makes one sick." BOSWELL: "Akenside's distinguished poem is his 'Pleasures of Imagination': but for my part, I never could admire it so much as most people do." JOHNSON: "Sir, I could not read it through." BOSWELL: "I have read it through; but I did not find any great power in it."

I mentioned Elwal, the heretic, whose trial Sir John Pringle had given me to read.[2] JOHNSON: "Sir, Mr. Elwal was, I think, an ironmonger at Wolverhampton; and he had a mind to make himself famous by being the founder of a new sect, which he wished much should be called *Elwallians*. He held that every thing in the Old Testament that was not typical, was to be of perpetual observ-

[1] It was invented by Defoe, and added to the second edition of the English translation of Drelincourt's work. *Malone.*

[2] *The Triumph of Truth; being an account of the trial of E. Elwal for Heresy and Blasphemy;* "rather," says Croker, "the rambling declamation of an enthusiast, than the account of a trial." Elwal was prosecuted at the Stafford Assizes in 1726 for publishing a book against the doctrine of the Trinity, but was discharged.

ance: and so he wore a riband in the plaits of his coat, and he also wore a beard. I remember I had the honour of dining in company with Mr. Elwal. There was one Barter, a miller, who wrote against him; and you had the controversy between Mr. ELWAL and Mr. BARTER. To try to make himself distinguished he wrote a letter to King George the Second, challenging him to dispute with him, in which he said, 'George, if you be afraid to come by yourself, to dispute with a poor old man, you may bring a thousand of your *black*-guards with you; and if you should still be afraid, you may bring a thousand of your *red*-guards.' The letter had something of the impudence of Junius to our present King. But the men of Wolverhampton were not so inflammable as the Common-Council of London; so Mr. Elwal failed in his scheme of making himself a man of great consequence."

On Tuesday, March 31, he and I dined at General Paoli's. A question was started whether the state of marriage was natural to man. JOHNSON: "Sir, it is so far from being natural for a man and woman to live in a state of marriage, that we find all the motives which they have for remaining in that connexion, and the restraints which civilized society imposes to prevent separation, are hardly sufficient to keep them together." The General said that in a state of nature a man and woman uniting together would form a strong and constant affection, by the mutual pleasure each would receive; and that the same causes of dissension would not arise between them, as occur between husband and wife in a civilized state. JOHNSON: "Sir, they would have dissensions enough, though of another kind. One would choose to go a hunting in this wood, the other in that; one would choose to go a fishing in this lake, the other in that: or, perhaps, one would choose to go a hunting, when the other would choose to go a fishing; and so they would part. Besides, Sir, a savage man and a savage woman meet by chance: and when the man sees another woman that pleases him better, he will leave the first."

We then fell into a disquisition whether there is any

beauty independent of utility. The General maintained there was not. Dr. Johnson maintained that there was; and he instanced a coffee-cup which he held in his hand, the painting of which was of no real use, as the cup would hold the coffee equally well if plain; yet the painting was beautiful.

We talked of the strange custom of swearing in conversation. The General said that all barbarous nations swore from a certain violence of temper that could not be confined to earth but was always reaching at the powers above. He said, too, that there was greater variety of swearing, in proportion as there was a greater variety of religious ceremonies.

Dr. Johnson went home with me to my lodgings in Conduit Street and drank tea, previous to our going to the Pantheon, which neither of us had seen before.

He said, "Goldsmith's 'Life of Parnell' is poor; not that it is poorly written, but that he had poor materials; for nobody can write the life of a man, but those who have eat and drunk and lived in social intercourse with him."

I said, that if it was not troublesome and presuming too much, I would request him to tell me all the little circumstances of his life; what schools he attended, when he came to Oxford, when he came to London, &c. &c. He did not disapprove of my curiosity as to these particulars; but said, "They'll come out by degrees, as we talk together."

He censured Ruffhead's Life of Pope;[1] and said, "he knew nothing of Pope, and nothing of poetry." He praised Dr. Joseph Warton's Essay on Pope; but said, he supposed we should have no more of it, as the author had not been able to persuade the world to think of Pope as he did. Boswell: "Why, Sir, should that prevent him from continuing his work? He is an ingenious counsel, who has made the most of his cause: he is not

[1] The materials for this biography were supplied by Warburton, who also corrected the proof-sheets. *Wright.*

obliged to gain it." JOHNSON: "But, Sir, there is a difference, when the cause is of a man's own making."

We talked of the proper use of riches. JOHNSON: "If I were a man of a great estate, I would drive all the rascals whom I did not like out of the county, at an election."

I asked him, how far he thought wealth should be employed in hospitality. JOHNSON: "You are to consider that ancient hospitality, of which we hear so much, was in an uncommercial country, when men, being idle, were glad to be entertained at rich men's tables. But in a commercial country, a busy country, time becomes precious, and therefore hospitality is not so much valued. No doubt there is still room for a certain degree of it; and a man has a satisfaction in seeing his friends eating and drinking around him. But promiscuous hospitality is not the way to gain real influence. You must help some people at table before others: you must ask some people how they like their wine oftener than others. You therefore offend more people than you please. You are like the French statesman, who said, when he granted a favour, '*J'ai fait dix mécontents et un ingrat.*'[1] Besides, Sir, being entertained ever so well at a man's table, impresses no lasting regard or esteem. No, Sir, the way to make sure of power and influence is, by lending money confidentially to your neighbours at a small interest, or perhaps at no interest at all, and having their bonds in your possession." BOSWELL: "May not a man, Sir, employ his riches to advantage, in educating young men of merit?" JOHNSON: "Yes, Sir, if they fall in your way; but if it be understood that you patronise young men of merit, you will be harassed with solicitations. You will have numbers forced upon you, who have no merit; some will force them upon you from mistaken partiality; and some from downright interested motives, without scruple; and you will be disgraced. Were I a rich man, I would propagate all kinds of trees that will grow in the open air. A green-

[1] This was Louis XIV. *Lockhart.*

house is childish. I would introduce foreign animals into the country; for instance, the reindeer."[1]

The conversation now turned on critical subjects. JOHNSON: "Bayes, in 'The Rehearsal,' is a mighty silly character. If it was intended to be like a particular man, it could only be diverting while that man was remembered. But I question whether it was meant for Dryden, as has been reported; for we know some of the passages said to be ridiculed, were written since the 'Rehearsal'; at least a passage mentioned in the Preface[2] is of a later date." I maintained that it had merit as a general satire on the self-importance of dramatic authors. But even in this light he held it very cheap.

We then walked to the Pantheon.[3] The first view of it did not strike us so much as Ranelagh, of which he said, the "*coup d'œil* was the finest thing he had ever seen." The truth is, Ranelagh is of a more beautiful form; more of it, or rather indeed the whole *rotunda*, appears at once, and it is better lighted. However, as Johnson observed, we saw the Pantheon in time of mourning, when there was a dull uniformity; whereas we had seen Ranelagh, when the view was enlivened with a gay profusion of colours. Mrs. Bosville, of Gunthwait, in

[1] This project has since been realized. Sir Henry Liddel, who made a spirited tour into Lapland, brought two reindeer to his estate in Northumberland, where they bred: but the race has unfortunately perished. B.

[2] By Preface Johnson must have meant the Address to the Reader which with a Key was prefixed to later editions of the play. To these editions also many passages were added in which Dryden's writings here alluded to were ridiculed. *Malone.* Johnson had ceased to doubt the identity of Bayes with Dryden when he came to write the latter's life. *Croker.*

[3] The Pantheon, in Oxford Street, was built in 1772 after Wyatt's design. It was meant for a sort of urban Ranelagh, which was at Chelsea. Horace Walpole called it "the most beautiful edifice in England;" Gibbon declared it to "be in point of *ennui* and magnificence the wonder of the eighteenth century and the British Empire." *Dr. Hill.* It was burned down in 1792, and rebuilt on a more moderate scale. *Croker.*

Yorkshire, joined us, and entered into conversation with us. Johnson said to me afterwards, "Sir, this is a mighty intelligent lady."

I said there was not half a guinea's worth of pleasure in seeing this place. JOHNSON: "But, Sir, there is half a guinea's worth of inferiority to other people in not having seen it." BOSWELL: "I doubt, Sir, whether there are many happy people here." JOHNSON: "Yes, Sir, there are many happy people here. There are many people here who are watching hundreds, and who think hundreds are watching them."

Happening to meet Sir Adam Ferguson,[1] I presented him to Dr. Johnson. Sir Adam expressed some apprehension that the Pantheon would encourage luxury. "Sir," said Johnson, "I am a great friend to public amusements; for they keep people from vice. You now (addressing himself to me) would have been with a wench, had you not been here.—O! I forgot you were married."

Sir Adam suggested, that luxury corrupts a people, and destroys the spirit of liberty. JOHNSON: "Sir, that is all visionary. I would not give half a guinea to live under one form of government rather than another. It is of no moment to the happiness of an individual. Sir, the danger of the abuse of power is nothing to a private man. What Frenchman is prevented from passing his life as he pleases?" SIR ADAM: "But, Sir, in the British Constitution it is surely of importance to keep up a spirit in the people, so as to preserve a balance against the Crown." JOHNSON: "Sir, I perceive you are a vile Whig.—Why all this childish jealousy of the power of the Crown? The Crown has not power enough. When I say that all governments are alike, I consider that in no government power can be abused long. Mankind will not bear it. If a sovereign oppresses his people to a great degree, they will rise and cut off his head. There is a remedy in human nature against tyranny, that will keep us safe under every form of government. Had not

[1] Sir Adam Ferguson, of Kilkerran in Ayrshire, Bart., M.P. for the county from 1774 to 1780. *Croker.*

the people of France thought themselves honoured in sharing in the brilliant actions of Louis XIV. they would not have endured him ; and we may say the same of the King of Prussia's people." Sir Adam introduced the ancient Greeks and Romans. JOHNSON : "Sir, the mass of both of them were barbarians. The mass of every people must be barbarous where there is no printing, and consequently knowledge is not generally diffused. Knowledge is diffused among our people by the newspapers." Sir Adam mentioned the orators, poets, and artists of Greece. JOHNSON : "Sir, I am talking of the mass of the people. We see even what the boasted Athenians were. The little effect which Demosthenes's orations had upon them, shews that they were barbarians."

Sir Adam was unlucky in his topics ; for he suggested a doubt of the propriety of bishops having seats in the House of Lords. JOHNSON : "How so, Sir? Who is more proper for having the dignity of a peer, than a bishop, provided a bishop be what he ought to be ; and if improper bishops be made, that is not the fault of the bishops, but of those who make them."

On Sunday, April 5, after attending divine service at St. Paul's church, I found him alone. Of a schoolmaster of his acquaintance, a native of Scotland, he said, "He has a great deal of good about him ; but he is also very defective in some respects. His inner part is good, but his outer part is mighty awkward. You in Scotland do not attain that nice critical skill in languages, which we get in our schools in England. I would not put a boy to him, whom I intended for a man of learning. But for the sons of citizens, who are to learn a little, get good morals, and then go to trade, he may do very well."

I mentioned a cause in which I had appeared as counsel at the bar of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, where a *Probationer* (as one licensed to preach, but not yet ordained, is called) was opposed in his application to be inducted, because it was alleged that he had been guilty of fornication five years before. JOHNSON : "Why, Sir, if he has repented, it is not a sufficient objec-

tion. A man who is good enough to go to heaven, is good enough to be a clergyman." This was a humane and liberal sentiment. But the character of a clergyman is more sacred than that of an ordinary Christian. As he is to instruct with authority, he should be regarded with reverence, as one upon whom divine truth has had the effect to set him above such transgressions, as men, less exalted by spiritual habits and yet upon the whole not to be excluded from heaven, have been betrayed into by the predominance of passion. That clergymen may be considered as sinners in general, as all men are, cannot be denied; but this reflection will not counteract their good precepts so much as the absolute knowledge of their having been guilty of certain specific immoral acts. I told him, that by the rules of the Church of Scotland, in their "Book of Discipline," if a *scandal*, as it is called, is not prosecuted for five years, it cannot afterwards be proceeded upon, "unless it be *of a heinous nature*, or again become flagrant;" and that hence a question arose, whether fornication was a sin of a heinous nature; and that I had maintained, that it did not deserve that epithet, inasmuch as it was not one of those sins which argue very great depravity of heart: in short, was not, in the general acceptation of mankind, a heinous sin. JOHNSON: "No, Sir, it is not a heinous sin. A heinous sin is that for which a man is punished with death or banishment." BOSWELL: "But, Sir, after I had argued that it was not a heinous sin, an old clergyman rose up, and repeating the text of Scripture denouncing judgment against whoremongers, asked, whether, considering this, there could be any doubt of fornication being a heinous sin." JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, observe the word *whoremonger*. Every sin, if persisted in, will become heinous. Whoremonger is a dealer in whores, as ironmonger is a dealer in iron. But as you don't call a man an ironmonger for buying and selling a penknife; so you don't call a man a whoremonger for getting one wench with child." [1]

[1] It must not be presumed that Dr. Johnson meant to give any countenance to licentiousness, though in the character of an

I spoke of the inequality of the livings of the clergy in England, and the scanty provisions of some of the curates. JOHNSON: "Why yes, Sir; but it cannot be helped. You must consider, that the revenues of the clergy are not at the disposal of the State, like the pay of the army. Different men have founded different churches; and some are better endowed, some worse. The State cannot interfere and make an equal division of what has been particularly appropriated. Now when a clergyman has but a small living, or even two small livings, he can afford very little to the curate."

He said, he went more frequently to church when there were prayers only, than when there was also a sermon, as the people required more an example for the one than the other; it being much easier for them to hear a sermon, than to fix their minds on prayer.

On Monday, April 6, I dined with him at Sir Alexander Macdonald's, where was a young officer in the regimentals of the Scots Royals, who talked with a vivacity, fluency, and precision so uncommon that he attracted particular attention. He proved to be the Honourable Thomas Erskine, youngest brother to the Earl of Buchan, who has since risen into such brilliant reputation at the Bar in Westminster Hall.[1]

Fielding being mentioned, Johnson exclaimed, "he was a blockhead;" and upon my expressing my astonishment at so strange an assertion, he said, "What I mean by his being a blockhead is, that he was a barren rascal." BOSWELL: "Will you not allow, Sir, that he draws very natural pictures of human life?" JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, it is of very low life. Richardson used to say, that

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advocate he made a just and subtle distinction between occasional and habitual transgression. B.

[1] Thomas Lord Erskine (1748–1823), youngest son of the tenth Earl of Buchan, served in the navy as well as in the army, and matriculated at Trinity College, Cambridge, before being called to the Bar in 1778. He was made a King's Counsel in 1783, in which year also he was returned to Parliament for Portsmouth. See Campbell's *Lives of the Chancellors*, vi.

had he not known who Fielding was, he should have believed he was an ostler. Sir, there is more knowledge of the heart in one letter of Richardson's, than in all 'Tom Jones.' I, indeed, never read 'Joseph Andrews.'" ERSKINE: "Surely, Sir, Richardson is very tedious." JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, if you were to read Richardson for the story, your impatience would be so much fretted that you would hang yourself. But you must read him for the sentiment, and consider the story as only giving occasion to the sentiment."—I have already given my opinion of Fielding; but I cannot refrain from repeating here my wonder at Johnson's excessive and unaccountable depreciation of one of the best writers that England has produced. "Tom Jones" has stood the test of public opinion with such success, as to have established its great merit, both for the story, the sentiments, and the manners, and also the varieties of diction, so as to leave no doubt of its having an animated truth of execution throughout.

A book of travels, lately published under the title of *Coriat Junior*, and written by Mr. Paterson,[1] was mentioned. Johnson said, this book was in imitation of Sterne,[2] and not of Coriat, whose name Paterson had chosen as a whimsical one. "Tom Coriat," said he, "was a humourist about the court of James the First. He had a mixture of learning, of wit, and of buffoonery. He first travelled through Europe, and published his travels.[3] He afterwards travelled on foot through Asia, and had made many remarks; but he died at Mandoa, and his remarks were lost."

We talked of gaming, and animadverted on it with

[1] Mr. Samuel Paterson, eminent for his knowledge of books. B.

[2] Mr. Paterson, in a pamphlet, produced some evidence to shew, that his work was written before Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* appeared. B.

[3] *Coriat's Crudities hastily gobled up in five Months Travels in France, Savoy, Italy, &c.* London, 1611. A new edition was published in 1776 containing his Letters from India and other new matter. Coriat was born in 1577, educated at Westminster and Oxford, and died at Surat in 1617. See Wood's *Athen. Oxon.*

severity. JOHNSON: "Nay, gentlemen, let us not aggravate the matter. It is not roguery to play with a man who is ignorant of the game, while you are master of it, and so win his money; for he thinks he can play better than you, as you think you can play better than he; and the superior skill carries it." ERSKINE: "He is a fool, but you are not a rogue." JOHNSON: "That's much about the truth, Sir. It must be considered, that a man who only does what every one of the society to which he belongs would do, is not a dishonest man. In the Republic of Sparta, it was agreed that stealing was not dishonourable, if not discovered. I do not commend a society where there is an agreement that what would not otherwise be fair, shall be fair; but I maintain, that an individual of any society, who practises what is allowed, is not a dishonest man." BOSWELL: "So then, Sir, you do not think ill of a man who wins perhaps forty thousand pounds in a winter?" JOHNSON: "Sir, I do not call a gamester a dishonest man; but I call him an unsocial man, an unprofitable man. Gaming is a mode of transferring property without producing any intermediate good. Trade gives employment to numbers, and so produces intermediate good."

Mr. Erskine told us that when he was in the island of Minorca, he not only read prayers but preached two sermons to the regiment. He seemed to object to the passage in Scripture, where we are told that the angel of the Lord smote in one night forty thousand Assyrians.[1] "Sir," said Johnson, "you should recollect that there was a supernatural interposition; they were destroyed by pestilence. You are not to suppose that the angel of the LORD went about and stabbed each of them with a dagger, or knocked them on the head, man by man."

After Mr. Erskine was gone, a discussion took place, whether the present Earl of Buchan, when Lord Cardross, did right to refuse to go Secretary of the Embassy to

[1] Either Erskine or Boswell's memory was at fault. The number was one hundred and eighty-five thousand (2 Kings xix. 35, and Isaiah xxxvii. 36).

Spain, when Sir James Gray, a man of inferior rank, went Ambassador. Dr. Johnson said, that perhaps in point of interest he did wrong; but in point of dignity he did well. Sir Alexander insisted that he was wrong: and said that Mr. Pitt intended it as an advantageous thing for him. "Why, Sir," said Johnson, "Mr. Pitt might think it an advantageous thing for him to make him a vintner, and get him all the Portugal trade: but he would have demeaned himself strangely had he accepted of such a situation. Sir, had he gone Secretary while his inferior was Ambassador, he would have been a traitor to his rank and family."

I talked of the little attachment which subsisted between near relations in London. "Sir," said Johnson, "in a country so commercial as ours, where every man can do for himself, there is not so much occasion for that attachment. No man is thought the worse of here, whose brother was hanged. In uncommercial countries, many of the branches of a family must depend on the stock; so, in order to make the head of the family take care of them, they are represented as connected with his reputation, that, self-love being interested, he may exert himself to promote their interest. You have first large circles, or clans: as commerce increases, the connexion is confined to families; by degrees that too goes off, as having become unnecessary, and there being few opportunities of intercourse. One brother is a merchant in the city, and another is an officer in the guards; how little intercourse can these two have!"

I argued warmly for the old feudal system. Sir Alexander opposed it, and talked of the pleasure of seeing all men free and independent. JOHNSON: "I agree with Mr. Boswell, that there must be high satisfaction in being a feudal lord; but we are to consider, that we ought not to wish to have a number of men unhappy for the satisfaction of one."—I maintained that numbers, namely, the vassals or followers, were not unhappy; for that there was a reciprocal satisfaction between the lord and them: he being kind in his authority over them; they being respectful and faithful to him.

On Thursday, April 9, I called on him to beg he would go and dine with me at the Mitre tavern. He had resolved not to dine with me at all this day, I know not for what reason; and I was so unwilling to be deprived of his company, that I was content to submit to suffer a want, which was at first somewhat painful, but he soon made me forget it; and a man is always pleased with himself, when he finds his intellectual inclinations predominate.

He observed, that to reason philosophically on the nature of prayer, was very unprofitable.

Talking of ghosts, he said, he knew one friend, who was an honest man and a sensible man, who told him he had seen a ghost; old Mr. Edward Cave, the printer at St. John's Gate. He said, Mr. Cave did not like to talk of it, and seemed to be in great horror whenever it was mentioned. BOSWELL: "Pray, Sir, what did he say was the appearance?" JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, something of a shadowy being."

I mentioned witches, and asked him what they properly meant. JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, they properly mean those who make use of the aid of evil spirits." BOSWELL: "There is no doubt, Sir, a general report and belief of their having existed." JOHNSON: "You have not only the general report and belief, but you have many voluntary solemn confessions." He did not affirm anything positively upon a subject which it is the fashion of the times to laugh at as a matter of absurd credulity. He only seemed willing, as a candid inquirer after truth, however strange and inexplicable, to shew that he understood what might be urged for it.[1]

On Friday, April 10, I dined with him at General Oglethorpe's, where we found Dr. Goldsmith.

Armorial bearings having been mentioned, Johnson said they were as ancient as the siege of Thebes, which he proved by a passage in one of the tragedies of Euripides.[2]

[1] See this curious question treated by him with most acute ability, *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, 3d edit. p. 33. B.

[2] Probably in the *Phœnissæ*, 1104–9. *J. Boswell, jun.*

I started the question, whether duelling was consistent with moral duty. The brave old General fired at this, and said, with a lofty air, "Undoubtedly a man has a right to defend his honour." GOLDSMITH (turning to me): "I ask you first, Sir, what would you do if you were affronted?" I answered, I should think it necessary to fight. "Why then," replied Goldsmith, "that solves the question." JOHNSON: "No, Sir, it does not solve the question. It does not follow, that what a man would do is therefore right." I said, I wished to have it settled, whether duelling was contrary to the laws of Christianity. Johnson immediately entered on the subject, and treated it in a masterly manner; and so far as I have been able to recollect, his thoughts were these: "Sir, as men become in a high degree refined, various causes of offence arise; which are considered to be of such importance, that life must be staked to atone for them, though in reality they are not so. A body that has received a very fine polish may be easily hurt. Before men arrive at this artificial refinement, if one tells his neighbour,—he lies, his neighbour tells him,—he lies; if one gives his neighbour a blow, his neighbour gives him a blow: but in a state of highly polished society, an affront is held to be a serious injury. It must, therefore, be resented, or rather a duel must be fought upon it; as men have agreed to banish from their society one who puts up with an affront without fighting a duel. Now, Sir, it is never unlawful to fight in self-defence. He, then, who fights a duel, does not fight from passion against his antagonist, but out of self-defence; to avert the stigma of the world, and to prevent himself from being driven out of society. I could wish there was not that superfluity of refinement; but while such notions prevail, no doubt a man may lawfully fight a duel."

Let it be remembered, that this justification is applicable only to the person who *receives* an affront. All mankind must condemn the aggressor.[1]

[1] Boswell's eldest son, Sir Alexander, was killed by Mr. Stuart of Duncarn in a duel arising out of some political squibs published

The General told us, that when he was a very young man, I think only fifteen, serving under Prince Eugene of Savoy, he was sitting in a company at table with a Prince of Wirtemberg. The Prince took up a glass of wine, and, by a fillip, made some of it fly in Oglethorpe's face. Here was a nice dilemma. To have challenged him instantly, might have fixed a quarrelsome character upon the young soldier: to have taken no notice of it, might have been considered as cowardice. Oglethorpe, therefore, keeping his eye upon the Prince, and smiling all the time, as if he took what his Highness had done in jest, said, "*Mon Prince*—" (I forget the French words he used, the purport however was), "That's a good joke; but we do it much better in England;" and threw a whole glass of wine in the Prince's face. An old General who sat by, said, "*Il a bien fait, mon Prince, vous l'avez commencé:*" and thus all ended in good humour.

Dr. Johnson said, "Pray, General, give us an account of the siege of Belgrade." Upon which the General, pouring a little wine upon the table, described every thing with a wet finger: "Here we were, here were the Turks," &c. &c. Johnson listened with the closest attention.

A question was started, how far people who disagreed in a capital point can live in friendship together. Johnson said they might. Goldsmith said they could not, as they had not the *idem velle atque idem nolle*,—the same likings and the same aversions. JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, you must shun the subject as to which you disagree. For instance, I can live very well with Burke: I love his knowledge, his genius, his diffusion, and affluence of conversation; but I would not talk to him of the Rockingham party." GOLDSMITH: "But, Sir, when people live together who have something as to which they disagree, and which they want to shun, they will be in the situation mentioned in the story of Bluebeard: 'You may

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in a Scottish newspaper, *The Sentinel*. At Stuart's trial this conversation was quoted in his defence by his counsel Jeffrey. See Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, vi. 528, and vii. 33, *note*.

look into all the chambers but one.' But we should have the greatest inclination to look into that chamber, to talk of that subject." JOHNSON (with a loud voice): "Sir, I am not saying that *you* could live in friendship with a man from whom you differ as to some point: I am only saying that *I* could do it. You put me in mind of Sappho in Ovid."[1]

Goldsmith told us, that he was now busy in writing a Natural History; and, that he might have full leisure for it, he had taken lodgings, at a farmer's house, near to the six mile-stone on the Edgeware-road, and had carried down his books in two returned post-chaises. He said, he believed the farmer's family thought him an odd character, similar to that in which the *Spectator* appeared to his landlady and her children: he was *The Gentleman*. Mr. Mickle, the translator of "The Lusiad," and I, went to visit him at this place a few days afterwards. He was not at home; but having a curiosity to see his apartment, we went in, and found curious scraps of descriptions of animals, scrawled upon the wall with a black lead pencil.

The subject of ghosts being introduced, Johnson repeated what he had told me of a friend of his, an honest man, and a man of sense, having asserted to him, that he had seen an apparition. Goldsmith told us, he was assured by his brother, the Reverend Mr. Goldsmith, that he also had seen one. General Oglethorpe told us that Prendergast, an officer in the Duke of Marlborough's army, had mentioned to many of his friends that he should die on a particular day: that upon that day a battle took place with the French; that after it was over, and Prendergast was still alive, his brother officers, while they were

[1] See Ovid. *Epist. Sapph. Phaon.* 31–40. Johnson was clearly thinking of the last couplet of the passage, which Pope has thus paraphrased:

> "If to no charms thou wilt thy heart resign,
> But such as merit, such as equal thine,
> By none, alas! by none thou canst be mov'd,
> Phaon alone by Phaon must be lov'd."

yet in the field, jestingly asked him, where was his prophecy now. Prendergast gravely answered, "I shall die, notwithstanding what you see." Soon afterwards, there came a shot from a French battery, to which the orders for a cessation of arms had not yet reached, and he was killed upon the spot. Colonel Cecil, who took possession of his effects, found in his pocket-book the following solemn entry: [Here the date.] "Dreamt—or————[1] Sir John Friend meets me:" (here the very day on which he was killed was mentioned). Prendergast had been connected with Sir John Friend, who was executed for high-treason. General Oglethorpe said, he was with Colonel Cecil, when Pope came and inquired into the truth of this story, which made a great noise at the time, and was then confirmed by the Colonel.[2]

On Saturday, April 11, he appointed me to come to him in the evening, when he should be at leisure to give me some assistance for the defence of Hastie, the schoolmaster of Campbelltown, for whom I was to appear in the House of Lords. When I came, I found him unwilling to exert himself. I pressed him to write down his thoughts upon the subject. He said, "There's no occasion for my writing. I'll talk to you." He was, however, at last prevailed on to dictate to me, while I wrote as follows:

"The charge is, that he has used immoderate and cruel correction. Correction, in itself, is not cruel; children, being not reasonable, can be governed only by fear. To impress this fear, is therefore one of the first duties of those who have the care of

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[1] Here was a blank, which may be filled up thus:—"*was told by an apparition;*"—the writer being probably uncertain whether he was asleep or awake, when his mind was impressed with the solemn presentiment with which the fact afterwards happened so wonderfully to correspond. B.

[2] Prendergast or Pendergrass, revealed the Assassination Plot of 1696 to the King when he found its real design. He was a Roman Catholic who would have joined willingly in a Jacobite insurrection, but would have nothing to do with murderers. See Macaulay's *History of England*, iv. 662–4.

children. It is the duty of a parent; and has never been thought inconsistent with parental tenderness. It is the duty of a master, who is in his highest exaltation when he is *loco parentis*. Yet, as good things become evil by excess, correction, by being immoderate, may become cruel. But when is correction immoderate? When it is more frequent or more severe than is required *ad monendum et docendum*, for reformation and instruction. No severity is cruel which obstinacy makes necessary: for the greatest cruelty would be, to desist, and leave the scholar too careless for instruction, and too much hardened for reproof. Locke, in his treatise of Education, mentions a mother, with applause, who whipped an infant eight times before she had subdued it; for had she stopped at the seventh act of correction, her daughter, says he, would have been ruined. The degrees of obstinacy in young minds are very different: as different must be the degrees of persevering severity. A stubborn scholar must be corrected till he is subdued. The discipline of a school is military. There must be either unbounded licence or absolute authority. The master, who punishes, not only consults the future happiness of him who is the immediate subject of correction, but he propagates obedience through the whole school; and establishes regularity by exemplary justice. The victorious obstinacy of a single boy would make his future endeavours of reformation or instruction totally ineffectual. Obstinacy, therefore, must never be victorious. Yet, it is well known, that there sometimes occurs a sullen and hardy resolution, that laughs at all common punishment, and bids defiance to all common degrees of pain. Correction must be proportioned to occasions. The flexible will be reformed by gentle discipline, and the refractory must be subdued by harsher methods. The degrees of scholastic, as of military punishment, no stated rules can ascertain. It must be enforced till it overpowers temptation; till stubbornness becomes flexible, and perverseness regular. Custom and reason have, indeed, set some bounds to scholastic penalties. The schoolmaster inflicts no capital punishments; nor enforces his edicts by either death or mutilation. The civil law has wisely determined, that a master who strikes at a scholar's eye shall be considered as criminal. But punishments, however severe, that produce no lasting evil, may be just and reasonable, because they may be necessary. Such have been the punishments used by the respondent. No scholar has gone from him either blind or lame, or with any of his limbs or powers injured or impaired. They were irregular, and he punished them: they were obstinate, and he enforced his punishment. But however provoked, he never exceeded the limits of moderation, for he inflicted nothing beyond present pain: and how much of that was required, no man is so

little able to determine as those who have determined against him: —the parents of the offenders.—It has been said, that he used unprecedented and improper instruments of correction. Of this accusation the meaning is not very easy to be found. No instrument of correction is more proper than another, but as it is better adapted to produce present pain without lasting mischief. Whatever were his instruments, no lasting mischief has ensued; and therefore, however unusual, in hands so cautious they were proper. —It has been objected, that the respondent admits the charge of cruelty, by producing no evidence to confute it. Let it be considered, that his scholars are either dispersed at large in the world, or continue to inhabit the place in which they were bred. Those who are dispersed cannot be found; those who remain are the sons of his prosecutors, and are not likely to support a man to whom their fathers are enemies. If it be supposed that the enmity of their fathers proves the justness of the charge, it must be considered how often experience shews us, that men who are angry on one ground will accuse on another; with how little kindness, in a town of low trade, a man who lives by learning is regarded; and how implicitly, where the inhabitants are not very rich, a rich man is hearkened to and followed. In a place like Campbelltown, it is easy for one of the principal inhabitants to make a party. It is easy for that party to heat themselves with imaginary grievances. It is easy for them to oppress a man poorer than themselves; and natural to assert the dignity of riches, by persisting in oppression. The argument which attempts to prove the impropriety of restoring him to the school, by alleging that he has lost the confidence of the people, is not the subject of juridical consideration; for he is to suffer, if he must suffer, not for their judgment, but for his own actions. It may be convenient for them to have another master; but it is a convenience of their own making. It would be likewise convenient for him to find another school; but this convenience he cannot obtain.—The question is not what is now convenient, but what is generally right. If the people of Campbelltown be distressed by the restoration of the respondent, they are distressed only by their own fault; by turbulent passions and unreasonable desires; by tyranny, which law has defeated, and by malice, which virtue has surmounted."

"This, Sir," said he, "you are to turn in your mind, and make the best use of it you can in your speech."

Of our friend Goldsmith he said, "Sir, he is so much afraid of being unnoticed that he often talks merely lest you should forget that he is in the company." BOSWELL:

"Yes, he stands forward." JOHNSON: "True, Sir; but if a man is to stand forward, he should wish to do it not in an awkward posture, not in rags, not so as that he shall only be exposed to ridicule." BOSWELL: "For my part, I like very well to hear honest Goldsmith talk away carelessly." JOHNSON: "Why yes, Sir; but he should not like to hear himself."

On Tuesday, April 14, the decree of the Court of Session in the Schoolmaster's cause was reversed in the House of Lords after a very eloquent speech by Lord Mansfield, who shewed himself an adept in school discipline, but I thought was too rigorous towards my client. On the evening of the next day I supped with Dr. Johnson, at the Crown and Anchor tavern in the Strand, in company with Mr. Langton and his brother-in-law, Lord Binning. I repeated a sentence of Lord Mansfield's speech, of which, by the aid of Mr. Longlands, the solicitor on the other side, who obligingly allowed me to compare his note with my own, I have a full copy: "My Lords, severity is not the way to govern either boys or men." "Nay," said Johnson, "it is the way to *govern* them. I know not whether it be the way to *mend* them."

I talked of the recent expulsion of six students from the University of Oxford, who were Methodists, and would not desist from publicly praying and exhorting.[1] JOHNSON: "Sir, that expulsion was extremely just and proper. What have they to do at a University, who are not willing to be taught, but will presume to teach? Where is religion to be learnt, but at a University? Sir, they were examined, and found to be mighty ignorant fellows." BOSWELL: "But, was it not hard, Sir, to expel them, for I am told they were good beings?" JOHNSON: "I believe they might be good beings; but they were not fit to be in the University of Oxford. A cow is a very good animal in the field; but we turn her

[1] Six members of St. Edmund's Hall were expelled in May 1768, nominally for their ignorance, in reality for the cause here mentioned. *Dr. Hill.*

out of a garden." Lord Elibank used to repeat this as an illustration uncommonly happy.

Desirous of calling Johnson forth to talk, and exercise his wit, though I should myself be the object of it, I resolutely ventured to undertake the defence of convivial indulgence in wine, though he was not to-night in the most genial humour. After urging the common plausible topics, I at last had recourse to the maxim, *in vino veritas*, a man who is well warmed with wine will speak truth. JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, that may be an argument for drinking, if you suppose men in general to be liars. But, Sir, I would not keep company with a fellow, who lies as long as he is sober, and whom you must make drunk before you can get a word of truth out of him."[1]

Mr. Langton told us, he was about to establish a school upon his estate, but it had been suggested to him that it might have a tendency to make the people less industrious. JOHNSON: "No, Sir. While learning to read and write is a distinction, the few who have that distinction may be the less inclined to work; but when every body learns to read and write, it is no longer a distinction. A man who has a laced waistcoat is too fine a man to work; but if every body had laced waistcoats, we should have people working in laced waistcoats. There are no people whatever more industrious, none who work more, than our manufacturers; yet they have all learnt to read and write. Sir, you must not neglect doing a thing immediately good, from fear of remote evil;—from fear of its being abused. A man who has candles may sit up too late, which he would not do if he had not candles; but nobody will deny that the art of making candles, by which light is continued to us beyond the time that the sun gives us light, is a

[1] Mrs. Piozzi, in her *Anecdotes*, p. 261, has given an erroneous account of this incident, as of many others. She pretends to relate it from recollection, as if she herself had been present: when the fact is that it was communicated to her by me. She has represented it as a personality, and the true point has escaped her. B.

valuable art, and ought to be preserved." BOSWELL: "But, Sir, would it not be better to follow nature; and go to bed and rise just as nature gives us light or withholds it?" JOHNSON: "No, Sir; for then we should have no kind of equality in the partition of our time between sleeping and waking. It would be very different in different seasons and in different places. In some of the northern parts of Scotland how little light is there in the depth of winter!"

We talked of Tacitus, and I hazarded an opinion that with all his merit for penetration, shrewdness of judgment, and terseness of expression, he was too compact, too much broken into hints, as it were, and therefore too difficult to be understood. To my great satisfaction, Dr. Johnson sanctioned this opinion. "Tacitus, Sir, seems to me rather to have made notes for an historical work, than to have written a history."[1]

At this time it appears from his "Prayers and Meditations," that he had been more than commonly diligent in religious duties, particularly in reading the Holy Scriptures. It was Passion Week, that solemn season which the Christian world has appropriated to the commemoration of the mysteries of our redemption, and during which, whatever embers of religion are in our breasts, will be kindled into pious warmth.

I paid him short visits both on Friday and Saturday, and seeing his large folio Greek Testament before him, beheld him with a reverential awe, and would not intrude upon his time. While he was thus employed to such good purpose, and while his friends in their intercourse with him constantly found a vigorous intellect and a lively imagination, it is melancholy to read in his private register, "My mind is unsettled and my memory confused. I have of late turned my thoughts with a very useless

[1] It is remarkable that Lord Monboddo, whom, on account of his resembling Dr. Johnson in some particulars, Foote called an Elzevir edition of him, has, by coincidence, made the very same remark. *Origin and Progress of Language*, vol. iii. 2nd edit. p. 219. B.

earnestness upon past incidents. I have yet got no command over my thoughts; an unpleasing incident is almost certain to hinder my rest." (*Pr. and Med.* p. 111.) What philosophic heroism was it in him to appear with such manly fortitude to the world, while he was inwardly so distressed! We may surely believe that the mysterious principle of being "made perfect through suffering," was to be strongly exemplified in him.

On Sunday, April 19, being Easter-day, General Paoli and I paid him a visit before dinner. We talked of the notion that blind persons can distinguish colours by the touch. Johnson said, that Professor Sanderson[1] mentions his having attempted to do it, but that he found he was aiming at an impossibility; that to be sure a difference in the surface makes the difference of colours; but that difference is so fine, that it is not sensible to the touch. The General mentioned jugglers and fraudulent gamesters, who could know cards by the touch. Dr. Johnson said, "The cards used by such persons must be less polished than ours commonly are."

We talked of sounds. The General said there was no beauty in a simple sound, but only in an harmonious composition of sounds. I presumed to differ from this opinion, and mentioned the soft and sweet sound of a fine woman's voice. JOHNSON: "No, Sir, if a serpent or a toad uttered it, you would think it ugly." BOSWELL: "So you would think, Sir, were a beautiful tune to be uttered by one of those animals." JOHNSON: "No, Sir, it would be admired. We have seen fine fiddlers whom we liked as little as toads" (laughing).

Talking on the subject of taste in the arts, he said that difference of taste was, in truth, difference of skill. BOSWELL: "But, Sir, is there not a quality called taste, which consists merely in perception or in liking? For instance, we find people differ much as to what is the best style of English composition. Some think Swift's

[1] Professor of Mathematics in the University of Cambridge; died 1739; he lost his sight from small-pox when only two years old. *Wright.*

the best; others prefer a fuller and grander way of writing." JOHNSON: "Sir, you must first define what you mean by style, before you can judge who has a good taste in style, and who has a bad. The two classes of persons whom you have mentioned, don't differ as to good and bad. They both agree that Swift has a good neat style; but one loves a neat style, another loves a style of more splendour. In like manner, one loves a plain coat, another loves a laced coat; but neither will deny that each is good in its kind."

While I remained in London this spring, I was with him at several other times, both by himself and in company. I dined with him one day at the Crown and Anchor tavern, in the Strand, with Lord Elibank, Mr. Langton, and Dr. Vansittart of Oxford. Without specifying each particular day, I have preserved the following memorable things.

I regretted the reflection in his preface to Shakespeare against Garrick, to whom we cannot but apply the following passage: "I collated such copies as I could procure, and wished for more, but have not found the collectors of these rarities very communicative." I told him, that Garrick had complained to me of it, and had vindicated himself by assuring me that Johnson was made welcome to the full use of his collection, and that he left the key of it with a servant, with orders to have a fire and every convenience for him. I found Johnson's notion was, that Garrick wanted to be courted for them, and that, on the contrary, Garrick should have courted him, and sent him the plays of his own accord. But, indeed, considering the slovenly and careless manner in which books were treated by Johnson, it could not be expected that scarce and valuable editions should have been lent to him.

A gentleman[1] having to some of the usual arguments for drinking added this: "You know, Sir, drinking drives

[1] No doubt the gentleman was Boswell. Dr. Campbell records a similar conversation at Mr. Thrale's table, in his diary for April 1, 1775; see Mrs. Napier's *Johnsoniana*, p. 256.

away care, and makes us forget whatever is disagreeable. Would not you allow a man to drink for that reason?" JOHNSON: "Yes, Sir, if he sat next *you*."

I expressed a liking for Mr. Francis Osborne's works, and asked him what he thought of that writer. He answered, "A conceited fellow. Were a man to write so now, the boys would throw stones at him." He, however, did not alter my opinion of a favourite author, to whom I was first directed by his being quoted in "The Spectator,"[1] and in whom I have found much shrewd and lively sense, expressed indeed in a style somewhat quaint, which, however, I do not dislike. His book has an air of originality. We figure to ourselves an ancient gentleman talking to us.

When one of his friends endeavoured to maintain that a country gentleman might contrive to pass his life very agreeably, "Sir," said he, "you cannot give me an instance of any man who is permitted to lay out his own time, contriving not to have tedious hours." This observation, however, is equally applicable to gentlemen who live in cities, and are of no profession.

He said, "there is no permanent national character; it varies according to circumstances. Alexander the Great swept India: now the Turks sweep Greece."

A learned gentleman who in the course of conversation wished to inform us of this simple fact, that the counsel upon the circuit at Shrewsbury were much bitten by fleas, took, I suppose, seven or eight minutes in relating it circumstantially. He in a plenitude of phrase told us that large bales of woollen cloth were lodged in the town-hall;—that by reason of this, fleas nestled there in prodigious numbers; that the lodgings of the counsel were near the town-hall;—and that those little animals moved from place to place with wonderful agility. Johnson sat in great impatience till the gentleman had finished his tedious narrative, and then burst out (playfully however), "It is a pity, Sir, that you have not seen

[1] No. 150. See also *The Tatler*, 230.

a lion; for a flea has taken you such a time, that a lion must have served you a twelvemonth."[1]

He would not allow Scotland to derive any credit from Lord Mansfield; for he was educated in England. "Much," said he, "may be made of a Scotchman, if he be *caught* young."

Talking of a modern historian and a modern moralist, he said, "There is more thought in the moralist than in the historian. There is but a shallow stream of thought in history." BOSWELL: "But surely, Sir, an historian has reflection." JOHNSON: "Why yes, Sir; and so has a cat when she catches a mouse for her kitten. But she cannot write like [Beattie]; neither can [Robertson]."

He said, "I am very unwilling to read the manuscripts of authors, and give them my opinion. If the authors who apply to me have money, I bid them boldly print without a name; if they have written in order to get money, I tell them to go to the booksellers and make the best bargain they can." BOSWELL: "But, Sir, if a bookseller should bring you a manuscript to look at?" JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, I would desire the bookseller to take it away."

I mentioned a friend of mine who had resided long in Spain, and was unwilling to return to Britain. JOHNSON: "Sir, he is attached to some woman." BOSWELL: "I rather believe, Sir, it is the fine climate which keeps him there." JOHNSON: "Nay, Sir, how can you talk so? What is *climate* to happiness? Place me in the heart of Asia, should I not be exiled? What proportion does climate bear to the complex system of human life? You may advise me to go to live at Bologna to eat sausages. The sausages there are the best in the world; they lose much by being carried."

On Saturday, May 9, Mr. Dempster and I had agreed

[1] Mrs. Piozzi, to whom I told this anecdote, has related it, as if the gentleman had given "the *natural history* of the *mouse*." *Anecdotes*, p. 191. B. The learned gentleman was Dr. Vansittart. *Croker.*

to dine by ourselves at the British Coffee-house. Johnson, on whom I happened to call in the morning, said, he would join us, which he did, and we spent a very agreeable day, though I recollect but little of what passed.

He said, "Walpole was a minister given by the King to the people: Pitt was a minister given by the people to the King,—as an adjunct."

"The misfortune of Goldsmith in conversation is this; he goes on without knowing how he is to get off. His genius is great, but his knowledge is small. As they say of a generous man, it is a pity he is not rich, we may say of Goldsmith, it is a pity he is not knowing. He would not keep his knowledge to himself."

Before leaving London this year, I consulted him upon a question purely of Scotch law. It was held of old, and continued for a long period, to be an established principle in that law, that whoever intermeddled with the effects of a person deceased, without the interposition of legal authority to guard against embezzlement, should be subjected to pay all the debts of the deceased, as having been guilty of what was technically called *vicious intromission*. The Court of Session had gradually relaxed the strictness of this principle, where the interference proved had been inconsiderable. In a case[1] which came before that Court the preceding winter, I had laboured to persuade the judge to return to the ancient law. It was my own sincere opinion, that they ought to adhere to it; but I had exhausted all my powers of reasoning in vain. Johnson thought as I did; and in order to assist me in my application to the Court for a revision and alteration of the judgment, he dictated to me the following argument:

"This, we are told, is a law which has its force only from the long practice of the Court: and may, therefore, be suspended or modified as the Court shall think proper.

"Concerning the power of the Court to make or to suspend a law, we have no intention to inquire. It is sufficient for our purpose that every just law is dictated by reason; and that the

[1] Wilson against Smith and Armour. B.

practice of every legal Court is regulated by equity. It is the quality of reason to be invariable and constant; and of equity, to give to one man what, in the same case, is given to another. The advantage which humanity derives from law is this: that the law gives every man a rule of action, and prescribes a mode of conduct which shall entitle him to the support and protection of society. That the law may be a rule of action, it is necessary that it be known; it is necessary that it be permanent and stable. The law is the measure of civil right: but if the measure be changeable, the extent of the thing measured never can be settled.

"To permit a law to be modified at discretion, is to leave the community without law. It is to withdraw the direction of that public wisdom, by which the deficiencies of private understanding are to be supplied. It is to suffer the rash and ignorant to act at discretion, and then to depend for the legality of that action on the sentence of the judge. He that is thus governed, lives not by law, but by opinion: not by a certain rule to which he can apply his intention before he acts, but by an uncertain and variable opinion, which he can never know but after he has committed the act on which that opinion shall be passed. He lives by a law (if a law it be) which he can never know before he has offended it. To this case may be justly applied that important principle, *misera est servitus ubi jus est aut incognitum aut vagum.* If Intromission be not criminal till it exceeds a certain point, and that point be unsettled, and consequently different in different minds, the right of Intromission, and the right of the creditor arising from it, are all *jura vaga*, and, by consequence, are *jura incognita;* and the result can be no other than a *misera servitus*, an uncertainty concerning the event of action, a servile dependence on private opinion.

"It may be urged, and with great plausibility, that there may be Intromission without fraud; which, however true, will by no means justify an occasional and arbitrary relaxation of the law. The end of law is protection as well as vengeance. Indeed, vengeance is never used but to strengthen protection. That society only is well governed, where life is freed from danger and from suspicion; where possession is so sheltered by salutary prohibitions, that violation is prevented more frequently than punished. Such a prohibition was this, while it operated with its original force. The creditor of the deceased was not only without loss, but without fear. He was not to seek a remedy for an injury suffered; for injury was warded off.

"As the law has been sometimes administered, it lays us open to wounds, because it is imagined to have the power of healing.

To punish fraud when it is detected, is the proper art of vindictive justice; but to prevent frauds, and make punishments unnecessary, is the great employment of legislative wisdom. To permit Intromission, and to punish fraud, is to make law no better than a pitfall. To tread upon the brink is safe; but to come a step farther is destruction. But, surely, it is better to enclose the gulf, and hinder all access, than by encouraging us to advance a little, to entice us afterwards a little farther, and let us perceive our folly only by our destruction.

"As law supplies the weak with adventitious strength, it likewise enlightens the ignorant with extrinsic understanding. Law teaches us to know when we commit injury, and when we suffer it. It fixes certain marks upon actions, by which we are admonished to do or to forbear them. *Qui sibi bene temperat in licitis*, says one of the fathers, *nunquam cadet in illicita*. He who never intromits at all, will never intromit with fraudulent intentions.

"The relaxation of the law against vicious intromission has been very favourably represented by a great master of jurisprudence,[1] whose words have been exhibited with unnecessary pomp, and seem to be considered as irresistibly decisive. The great moment of his authority makes it necessary to examine his position. 'Some ages ago,' says he, 'before the ferocity of the inhabitants of this part of the island was subdued, the utmost severity of the civil law was necessary, to restrain individuals from plundering each other. Thus, the man who intermeddled irregularly with the moveables of a person deceased, was subjected to all the debts of the deceased without limitation. This makes a branch of the law of Scotland, known by the name of *vicious intromission*; and so rigidly was this regulation applied in our Courts of Law, that the most trifling moveable abstracted *mala fide* subjected the intermeddler to the foregoing consequences, which proved in many instances a most rigorous punishment. But this severity was necessary, in order to subdue the undisciplined nature of our people. It is extremely remarkable that in proportion to our improvement in manners, this regulation has been gradually softened, and applied by our sovereign Court with a sparing hand.'

"I find myself under a necessity of observing that this learned and judicious writer has not accurately distinguished the deficiencies and demands of the different conditions of human life, which, from a degree of savageness and independence, in which all laws are vain, passes or may pass, by innumerable gradations, to a state of reciprocal benignity in which laws shall be no longer necessary.

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[1] Lord Kames, in his *Historical Law Tracts*. B.

Men are first wild and unsocial, living each man to himself, taking from the weak, and losing to the strong. In their first coalitions of society much of this original savageness is retained. Of general happiness, the product of general confidence, there is yet no thought. Men continue to prosecute their own advantages by the nearest way; and the utmost severity of the civil law is necessary to restrain individuals from plundering each other. The restraints then necessary, are restraints from plunder, from acts of public violence, and undisguised oppression. The ferocity of our ancestors, as of all other nations, produced not fraud, but rapine. They had not yet learned to cheat, and attempted only to rob. As manners grow more polished with the knowledge of good, men attain likewise dexterity in evil. Open rapine becomes less frequent, and violence gives way to cunning. Those who before invaded pastures and stormed houses, now begin to enrich themselves by unequal contracts and fraudulent intromissions. It is not against the violence of ferocity, but the circumventions of deceit, that this law was framed; and I am afraid the increase of commerce, and the incessant struggle for riches which commerce excites, gives us no prospect of an end speedily to be expected of artifice and fraud. It therefore seems to be no very conclusive reasoning, which connects those two propositions;—'the nation is become less ferocious, and therefore the laws against fraud and *covin*[1] shall be relaxed.'

"Whatever reason may have influenced the judges to a relaxation of the law, it was not that the nation was grown less fierce; and, I am afraid, it cannot be affirmed, that it is grown less fraudulent.

"Since this law has been represented as rigorously and unreasonably penal, it seems not improper to consider what are the conditions and qualities that make the justice or propriety of a penal law.

"To make a penal law reasonable and just, two conditions are necessary, and two proper. It is necessary that the law should be adequate to its end; that, if it be observed, it shall prevent the evil against which it is directed. It is, secondly, necessary that the end of the law be of such importance, as to deserve the security of a penal sanction. The other conditions of a penal law, which though not absolutely necessary, are to a very high degree fit, are, that to the moral violation of the law there are many temptations, and that of the physical observance there is great facility.

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[1] *Covin*, a deceitful agreement between two or more to the hurt of another. Johnson's Dictionary.

"All these conditions apparently concur to justify the law which we are now considering. Its end is the security of property; and property very often of great value. The method by which it effects the security is efficacious, because it admits, in its original rigour, no gradations of injury; but keeps guilt and innocence apart, by a distinct and definite limitation. He that intromits is criminal; he that intromits not is innocent. Of the two secondary considerations it cannot be denied that both are in our favour. The temptation to intromit is frequent and strong; so strong and so frequent, as to require the utmost activity of justice, and vigilance of caution, to withstand its prevalence; and the method by which a man may entitle himself to legal intromission is so open and so facile, that to neglect it is a proof of fraudulent intention; for why should a man omit to do (but for reasons which he will not confess) that which he can do so easily, and that which he knows to be required by the law? If temptation were rare, a penal law might be deemed unnecessary. If the duty enjoined by the law were of difficult performance, omission, though it could not be justified, might be pitied. But in the present case, neither equity nor compassion operate against it. A useful, a necessary law is broken, not only without a reasonable motive, but with all the inducements to obedience that can be derived from safety and facility.

"I therefore return to my original position, that a law, to have its effects, must be permanent and stable. It may be said, in the language of the schools, *Lex non recipit majus et minus*,—we may have a law, or we may have no law, but we cannot have half a law. We must either have a rule of action, or be permitted to act by discretion and by chance. Deviations from the law must be uniformly punished, or no man can be certain when he shall be safe.

"That from the rigour of the original institution this Court has sometimes departed, cannot be denied. But, as it is evident that such deviations, as they make law uncertain, make life unsafe, I hope, that of departing from it there will now be an end; that the wisdom of our ancestors will be treated with due reverence; and that consistent and steady decisions will furnish the people with a rule of action, and leave fraud and fraudulent intromissions no future hope of impunity or escape."

With such comprehension of mind, and such clearness of penetration, did he thus treat a subject altogether new to him, without any other preparation than my having stated to him the arguments which had been used on each

side of the question. His intellectual powers appeared with peculiar lustre when tried against those of a writer of such fame as Lord Kames, and that too in his Lordship's own department.

This masterly argument, after being prefaced and concluded with some sentences of my own, and garnished with the usual formularies, was actually printed and laid before the Lords of Session, but without success. My respected friend Lord Hailes, however, one of that honourable body, had critical sagacity enough to discover a more than ordinary hand in the *Petition*. I told him Dr. Johnson had favoured me with his pen. His Lordship, with wonderful *acumen*, pointed out exactly where his composition began, and where it ended. But that I may do impartial justice, and conform to the great rule of Courts, *Suum cuique tribuito*, I must add, that their Lordships in general, though they were pleased to call this "a well-drawn paper," preferred the former very inferior petition which I had written; thus confirming the truth of an observation made to me by one of their number, in a merry mood: "My dear Sir, give yourself no trouble in the composition of the papers you present to us: for, indeed, it is casting pearls before swine."

I renewed my solicitations that Dr. Johnson would this year accomplish his long-intended visit to Scotland.

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"DEAR SIR,

"THE regret has not been little with which I have missed a journey so pregnant with pleasing expectations, as that in which I could promise myself not only the gratification of curiosity, both rational and fanciful, but the delight of seeing those whom I love and esteem. * * * * * * * But such has been the course of things, that I could not come; and such has been, I am afraid, the state of my body, that it would not well have seconded my inclination. My body, I think, grows better, and I refer my hopes to another year; for I am very sincere in my design to pay the visit, and take the ramble. In the meantime, do not omit any opportunity of keeping up a favourable opinion of me in the minds of any of my friends. Beattie's book is, I believe,

every day more liked; at least, I like it more, as I look more upon it.[1]

"I am glad if you got credit by your cause, and am yet of opinion, that our cause was good, and that the determination ought to have been in your favour. Poor Hastie, I think, had but his deserts.

"You promised to get me a little Pindar, you may add to it a little Anacreon.

"The leisure which I cannot enjoy, it will be a pleasure to hear that you employ upon the antiquities of the feudal establishment. The whole system of ancient tenures is gradually passing away; and I wish to have the knowledge of it preserved adequate and complete. For such an institution makes a very important part of the history of mankind. Do not forget a design so worthy of a scholar who studies the law of his country, and of a gentleman who may naturally be curious to know the condition of his own ancestors. I am, dear Sir, yours with great affection,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"August 31, 1772."

"TO DR. JOHNSON.

"Edinburgh, Dec. 25, 1772.

"MY DEAR SIR,

* * * * * *

"I WAS much disappointed that you did not come to Scotland last autumn. However, I must own that your letter prevents me from complaining; not only because I am sensible that the state of your health was but too good an excuse, but because you write in a strain which shews that you have agreeable views of the scheme which we have so long proposed.

* * * * * *

"I communicated to Beattie what you said of his book in your last letter to me. He writes to me thus; 'You judge very rightly in supposing that Dr. Johnson's favourable opinion of my book must give me great delight. Indeed it is impossible for me to say how much I am gratified by it; for there is not a man upon earth whose good opinion I would be more ambitious to cultivate. His talents and his virtues I reverence more than any words can express. The extraordinary civilities (the paternal attentions I should rather say) and the many instructions I have had the

[1] *Essay on Truth*, 1770, of which five large editions were sold in the first four years of publication, besides three translations in French, Dutch, and German. *Dr. Hill.*

honour to receive from him, will to me be a perpetual source of pleasure in the recollection.

"*Dum memor ipse mei, dum spiritus hos reget artus.*"
(Virgil, *Æn.* iv. 336.)

"'I had still some thoughts, while the summer lasted, of being obliged to go to London on some little business; otherwise I should certainly have troubled him with a letter several months ago, and given some vent to my gratitude and admiration. This I intend to do, as soon as I am left a little at leisure. Meantime, if you have occasion to write to him, I beg you will offer him my most respectful compliments, and assure him of the sincerity of my attachment and the warmth of my gratitude.'

* * * * * *

"I am, &c.
"JAMES BOSWELL."

In 1773, his only publication was an edition of his folio Dictionary, with additions and corrections; nor did he, so far as is known, furnish any productions of his fertile pen to any of his numerous friends or dependants, except the Preface* to his old amanuensis Macbean's "Dictionary of Ancient Geography."[1] His "Shakespeare," indeed, which had been received with high approbation by the public, and gone through several editions, was this year re-published by George Steevens, Esq., a gentleman not only deeply skilled in ancient learning, and of very extensive reading in English literature, especially the early writers, but at the same time of acute discernment and elegant taste. It is almost unnecessary to say, that by his great and valuable additions to Dr. Johnson's work, he justly obtained considerable reputation:

"*Divisum imperium cum Jove Cæsar habet.*"

[1] He, however, wrote, or partly wrote, an epitaph on Mrs. Bell, wife of his friend John Bell, Esq. brother of the Rev. Dr. Bell, Prebendary of Westminster, which is printed in his Works. It is in English prose, and has so little of his manner that I did not believe he had any hand in it, till I was satisfied of the fact by the authority of Mr. Bell. B.

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"DEAR SIR,

"I HAVE read your kind letter much more than the elegant Pindar which it accompanied. I am always glad to find myself not forgotten; and to be forgotten by you would give me great uneasiness. My northern friends have never been unkind to me: I have from you, dear Sir, testimonies of affection, which I have not often been able to excite; and Dr. Beattie rates the testimony which I was desirous of paying to his merit, much higher than I should have thought it reasonable to expect.

"I have heard of your masquerade.[1] What says your synod to such innovations? I am not studiously scrupulous, nor do I think a masquerade either evil in itself, or very likely to be the occasion of evil; yet as the world thinks it a very licentious relaxation of manners, I would not have been one of the *first* masquers in a country where no masquerade had ever been before.[2]

"A new edition of my great Dictionary is printed, from a copy which I was persuaded to revise; but having made no preparation, I was able to do very little. Some superfluities I have expunged, and some faults I have corrected, and here and there have scattered a remark; but the main fabric of the work remains as it was. I had looked very little into it since I wrote it, and, I think, I found it full as often better, as worse, than I expected.

"Baretti and Davies have had a furious quarrel; a quarrel, I think, irreconcilable. Dr. Goldsmith has a new comedy, which is expected in the spring. No name is yet given it. The chief diversion arises from a stratagem by which a lover is made to mistake his future father-in-law's house for an inn. This, you see, borders upon farce. The dialogue is quick and gay, and the incidents are so prepared as not to seem improbable.[3]

"I am sorry that you lost your cause of Intromission, because I yet think the arguments on your side unanswerable. But you seem, I think, to say that you gained reputation even by your defeat; and reputation you will daily gain, if you keep Lord Auchinleck's precept in your mind, and endeavour to consolidate in your mind a firm and regular system of law, instead of picking up occasional fragments.

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[1] Given by a lady at Edinburgh. B. The lady, Croker tells us, was the Countess Dowager of Fife. Boswell went as a Dumb Conjurer.

[2] There had been masquerades in Scotland; but not for a very long time. B.

[3] *She Stoops to Conquer* was first acted on March 15, 1773, at Covent Garden.

"My health seems in general to improve; but I have been troubled for many weeks with a vexatious catarrh, which is sometimes sufficiently distressful. I have not found any great effects from bleeding and physic, and am afraid that I must expect help from brighter days and softer air.

"Write to me now and then; and whenever any good befalls you, make haste to let me know it, for no one will rejoice at it more than, dear Sir, your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"London, Feb. 22, 1773.

"You continue to stand very high in the favour of Mrs. Thrale."

While a former edition of my work was passing through the press, I was unexpectedly favoured with a packet from Philadelphia, from Mr. James Abercrombie a gentleman of that country, who is pleased to honour me with very high praise of my "Life of Dr. Johnson." To have the fame of my illustrious friend, and his faithful biographer, echoed from the New World is extremely flattering; and my grateful acknowledgements shall be wafted across the Atlantic. Mr. Abercrombie has politely conferred on me a considerable additional obligation, by transmitting to me copies of two letters from Dr. Johnson to American gentlemen. "Gladly, Sir," says he, "would I have sent you the originals; but being the only relics of the kind in America, they are considered by the possessors of such inestimable value, that no possible consideration would induce them to part with them. In some future publication of yours relative to that great and good man, they may perhaps be thought worthy of insertion."

"TO MR. B——D.[1]

"SIR,

"THAT in the hurry of a sudden departure you should yet find leisure to consult my convenience, is a degree of kindness,

[1] This gentleman, who now resides in America in a public character of considerable dignity, desired that his name might not be transcribed at full length. B. Croker supposes him to have been Mr. Richard Bland of Virginia, whose *Inquiry into the Rights of the British Colonies* was republished in London in 1770.

and an instance of regard, not only beyond my claims, but above my expectation. You are not mistaken in supposing that I set a high value on my American friends, and that you should confer a very valuable favour upon me by giving me an opportunity of keeping myself in their memory.

"I have taken the liberty of troubling you with a packet, to which I wish a safe and speedy conveyance, because I wish a safe and speedy voyage to him that conveys it. I am, Sir, your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"London, Johnson's Court,
"Fleet Street, March 4, 1773."

"TO THE REVEREND MR. WHITE.[1]

"DEAR SIR,

"YOUR kindness for your friends accompanies you across the Atlantic. It was long since observed by Horace, that no ship could leave care behind: you have been attended in your voyage by other powers,—by benevolence and constancy; and I hope care did not often shew her face in their company.

"I received the copy of 'Rasselas.' The impression is not magnificent, but it flatters an author, because the printer seems to have expected that it would be scattered among the people. The little book has been well received, and is translated into Italian, French, German, and Dutch. It has now one honour more by an American edition.

"I know not that much has happened since your departure that can engage your curiosity. Of all public transactions the whole world is now informed by the newspapers. Opposition seems to despond; and the dissenters, though they have taken advantage of unsettled times, and a Government much enfeebled, seem not likely to gain any immunities.

"Dr. Goldsmith has a new comedy in rehearsal at Covent Garden, to which the manager predicts ill success. I hope he will be mistaken. I think it deserves a very kind reception.

"I shall soon publish a new edition of my large Dictionary; I

[1] Now Doctor White, and bishop of the Episcopal Church in Pennsylvania. During his first visit to England in 1771, as a candidate for holy orders, he was several times in company with Dr. Johnson, who expressed a wish to see the edition of *Rasselas*, which Dr. White told him had been printed in America. Dr. White on his return, immediately sent him a copy. *Croker.*

have been persuaded to revise it, and have mended some faults, but added little to its usefulness.

"No book has been published since your departure, of which much notice is taken. Faction only fills the town with pamphlets, and greater subjects are forgotten in the noise of discord.

"Thus have I written, only to tell you how little I have to tell. Of myself I can only add, that having been afflicted many weeks with a very troublesome cough, I am now recovered.

"I take the liberty which you give me of troubling you with a letter, of which you will please to fill up the direction. I am, Sir, your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON.

"Johnson's Court, Fleet Street,
"London, March 4, 1773."

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